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ADVENTURE IN THE

DAVENPORT DUNN



The "Princess" at the Opera.

DAVENPORT DUNN

BY

CHARLES LEVER

AUTHOR OF 'HARRY LORREQUER

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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TO

THE MOST NOBLE THE MARQUESS OF NORMANBY, K.G.

&c, &c. &c. &c.

MY DEAR LORD NORMANBY,

IF the kind interest with which you followed this story, while I was writing it, might naturally suggest my desire to dedicate it to your name, I am equally prompted by another motive—my wish to record all the pride I feel in the honour of your friendship and the confidence of your intimacy; nor is this feeling lessened as I remember that I am about to leave the neighbourhood in which I have so long enjoyed the charm of your acquaintance. Believe me, my dear Lord, that in my removal I recognise no greater deprivation to myself than the loss of that intercourse; and with this assurance I beg to remain,

Very sincerely and faithfully yours,

CHARLES LEVER.

Casa Capponi, Florence,
March 10th, 1859.

DAVENPORT DUNN:

A MAN OF OUR DAY.

CHAPTER I.

HYDROPATHIC ACQUAINTANCES.

WE are at Como, on the lake—that spot so beloved of opera dancers—the day-dream of prima donnas—the Elysium of retired barytones! And with what reason should this be the Paradise of all who have lived and sighed, and warbled and pirouetted, within the charmed circle of the footlights? The crystal waters mirroring every cliff and crag with intense distinctness; the vegetation variegated to the very verge of extravagance; orange-trees overloaded with fruit; arbutus only too much bespangled with red berries; villas, more coquettish than ever scene-painter conceived, with vistas of rooms within, all redolent of luxury; terraces, and statues, and vases, and fountains, and marble balconies, steeped in a thousand balmy odours, make up a picture which well may fascinate those whose ideal of beauty is formed of such gorgeous groupings. There is something of unreality in the brilliant colouring and variety of the scene suggesting the notion, that at any moment the tenor may emerge, velvet mantle and all, from the copse before you; or a prima donna, in all the dishevelment of her back hair, rush madly to your feet. There is not a portal from which an angry father may not issue; not a shady walk that might not be trod by an incensed basso!

The rustic bridges seem made for the tiny feet of short-petticoated damsels, daintily tripping, with white-napkin covered

baskets, to soft music; and every bench appears but waiting for that wearied old peasant, in blue stockings, a staff, and a leather belt, that has vented his tiresomeness in the same spot for the last half century. Who wonders, if the distracted Princess of "the scene" should love a picture that recalls the most enthusiastic triumphs of her success? Why should not the retired "Peri" like to wander at will through a more enchanting garden than ever she pirouetted in?

Conspicuous amongst the places where these stage-like elements abound is the Villa d'Este; situated in a little bay, with two jutting promontories to guard it, the ground offers every possible variety of surface and elevation. From the very edge of the calm lake, terrace rises above terrace, clad with all that is rich and beautiful in vegetation; rocks, and waterfalls, and ruins, and statues abound. Everything that money could buy, and bad taste suggest, are there heaped with a profusion that is actually confounding. Every stone stair leads to some new surprise; every table-land opens some fresh and astonishing prospect. Incongruous, inharmonious, tea-gardenish as it is, there is still a charm in the spot which no efforts of the vilest taste seem able to eradicate. The vines *will* cluster in graceful groupings; the oranges *will* glow in gorgeous contrast to their dark mantle of leaves; water *will* leap with its own spontaneous gladness, and fall in diamond showers over a grassy carpet no emerald ever rivalled; and, more than all, the beautiful lake itself *will* reflect the picture, with such softened effects of light and shadow, that all the perversions of human ingenuity are totally lost in the transmission.

This same Villa d'Este was once the scene of a sad drama; but it is not to this era in its history we desire now to direct our reader's attention, but to a period much later, when no longer the home of an exiled Princess, or the retreat where shame and sorrow abandoned themselves to every excess, its changed fortune had converted it into an establishment for the water cure!

The prevailing zeal of our day is to simplify everything, even to things which will not admit of simplicity. What with our local athenæums, our mechanics' institutes, our lecturing lords and discoursing baronets, we have done a great deal. Science has been popularised, remote geographies made familiar, complex machinery explained, mysterious inscriptions rendered intelligible. How could it be expected that in the general enthusiasm for useful knowledge medicine should escape, or that its secrets should exempt from a scrutiny that has spared nothing? Hence

have sprung up those various sects in the curative art which, professing to treat rationally and openly what hitherto has been shrouded in mysticism and deception, have multiplied themselves into grape cures, milk cures, and water cures, and Heaven knows how many other strange devices "to cheat the ills that flesh is heir to."

We are not going to quarrel with any of these new religions; we forgive them much for the simple service they have done, in withdrawing their followers from the confined air, the laborious life, the dreary toil, or the drearier dissipation of cities, to the fresh and invigorating breezes, the cheerful quietude, and the simple pleasures of a country existence.

We care little for the regimen or the ritual, be it lentils or asses' milk, Tyrol grapes, or pure water, so that it be administered on the breezy mountain side, or in the healthful air of some lofty "Plateau," away from the cares, the ambitions, the strife, and the jarrings of the active world, with no seductions of dissipation, neither the prolonged stimulants, nor the late hours of fashion.

It was a good thought, too, to press the picturesque into the service of health, and show the world what benefits may flow, even to nerves and muscles, from elevated thoughts and refined pleasures. All this is, however, purely digressionary, since we are more concerned with the social than the medical aspects of Hydropathy, and so we come back at once to Como. The sun has just risen, on a fresh morning in autumn, over the tall mountain east of the lake, making the whole western shore, where the Villa d'Este stands, all a-glitter with his rays. Every rock, and crag, and promontory are picked out with a sharp distinctness, every window is a-blaze, and streams of light shoot into many a grove and copse, as though glad to pierce their way into cool spots where the noonday sun himself can never enter. On the opposite shore, a dim and mysterious shadow wraps every object, faint outlines of tower and palace loom through the darkness, and a strange hazy depth encloses the whole scene. Such is the stillness, however, that the opening of a casement, or the plash of a stone in the water, is heard across the lake, and voices come from the mysterious gloom with an effect almost preternaturally striking.

On a terrace high up above the lake, sheltered with leafy fig-trees and prickly pears, there walks a gentleman, sniffing the morning air, and evidently bent on inhaling health at every pore.

Nothing in his appearance indicates the invalid; every gesture, as he moves, rather displays a conscious sense of health and vigour. Somewhat above the middle size, compactly but not heavily built, it is very difficult to guess his years; for though his hair and the large whiskers which meet beneath his chin are perfectly white, his clear blue eyes and regular teeth show no signs of age. Singularly enough, it is his dress that gives the clue to this mystery. His tightly-fitting frock, his bell-shaped hat, and his shapely trousers, all tell of a fashion antecedent to our loosely-hanging vestments and uncared-for garments; for the Viscount Lackington was a lord in waiting to the "First Gentleman" in Europe at a time when Paletots were unknown, and Jim Crows had not been imagined.

Early as was the hour, his dress was perfect in all its details, and the accurate folds of his immaculate cravat, and the spotless brilliancy of his boots, would have done credit to Bond-street in days when Bond-street cherished such glories. Let our modern critics sneer as they will at the dandyism of that day, the gentleman of the time was a very distinctive individual, and, in the subdued colour of his habiliments, their studious simplicity, and, above all, their unvarying uniformity, utterly defied all the attempts of spurious imitators.

Our story opens only a few years back, and Lord Lackington was then one of the very few who perpetuated the traditions in costume of that celebrated period; but he did so with such unerring accuracy, that men actually wondered where those marvellously shaped hats were made, or how those creaseless coats were ever fashioned. Even to the perfume of his handkerchief, the faintest and most evanescent of odours, all were mysteries that none could penetrate.

As he surveyed the landscape through his double eye-glass, he smiled graciously and blandly, and gently inclined his head, as though to say, "Very prettily done, water and mountains. I'm quite satisfied with you, trees; you please me very much indeed! Trickle away little fountain—the picture is the better for it." His Lordship had soon, however, other objects to engage his attention than the inanimate constituents of the scene. The spot which he had selected for his point of view was usually traversed, in their morning walks, by the other residents of the "Cure," and this circumstance permitted him to receive the homage of such early risers as were fain to couple with their pursuit of health the recognition of a great man.

Like poverty, hydropathy makes us acquainted with strange

associates. The present establishment was too recently formed to have acquired any very distinctive celebrity, but it was sufficiently crowded. There was a great number of third-rate Italians from the Lombard towns and cities, a sprinkling of inferior French, a few English, a stray American or so, and an Irish family, on their way to Italy, sojourning here rather for economy than health, and fancying that they were acquiring habits and manners that would serve them through their winter's campaign.

The first figure which emerged upon the plateau was that of a man so swathed in great-coat, cap, and worsted wrappers, that it was difficult to guess what he could be. He came forward at a shambling trot, and was about to pass on without looking aside, when Lord Lackington called out,

"Ah! Spicer, have you got off that eleven pounds yet?"

"No, my Lord, but very near it. I'm seven stone ten, and at seven eight I'm all right."

"Push along, then, and don't lose your training," said his Lordship, dismissing him with a bland wave of the hand. And the other made an attempt at a salutation, and passed on.

"Madame la Marquise, your servant. You ascend these mountain steeps like a chamois!"

This compliment was addressed to a little, very fat old lady, who came snorting along like a grampus.

"Benedetto Dottore!" cried she. "He will have it that I must go up to the stone cross yonder every morning before breakfast, and I know I shall burst a blood-vessel yet in the attempt."

A chair, with a mass of horse-clothing and furs, surmounted by a little yellow wizened face, was next borne by, to which Lord Lackington bowed courteously, saying, "Your Excellency improves at every hour."

His Excellency gave a brief nod and a little faint smile, swallowed a mouthful from a silver flask presented by his servant, and disappeared.

"Ah! the fair syren sisters! what a charming vision!" said his Lordship, as two bright-cheeked, laughing-eyed girls bounced upon the terrace in all the high-hearted enjoyment of good health and good spirits.

"Molly, for shame!" cried what seemed the elder, a damsel of about nineteen, as the younger, holding out her dress with both hands, performed a kind of minute curtsy to the Viscount, to which he responded with a bow that might have done credit to Versailles.

"Perfectly done—grace and elegance itself. The foot a little—a very little more in advance."

"Just because you want to look at it," cried she, laughing.

"Molly, Molly!" exclaimed the other, rebukingly.

"Let him deny it if he can, Lucy," retorted she. "But here's papa."

And as she spoke, a square-built, short, florid man, fanning his bald head with a straw hat, puffed his way forward.

"My Lord, I'm your most obaydient!" said he, with a very unmistakably Irish enunciation.

"O'Reilly, I'm delighted to see you. These charming girls of yours have just put me in good humour with the whole creation. What a lovely spot this is; how beautiful!"

Though his Lordship's arm and outstretched hand directed attention to the scenery, his eyes never wandered from the pretty features of the laughing girl beside him.

"It's like Banthry!" said Mr. O'Reilly—"it's the very ditto of Banthry."

"Indeed!" exclaimed my Lord, still pursuing his scrutiny.

"Only Banthry's bigger and wider. Indeed, I may say finer."

"Nothing in *my* estimation, can exceed this!" said his Lordship, with a distinctive smile, addressed to the young lady.

"I'm glad you think so," said she, with a merry laugh. And then, with a pirouette, she sprang up the steep steps on the rocky path before her, and disappeared, her sister as quickly following, leaving Mr. O'Reilly alone with his Lordship.

"What heaps of money she laid out here," exclaimed O'Reilly, as he looked at the labyrinth of mad ruins, and rustic bridges, and hanging gardens on every side of him.

"Large sums—very large indeed!" said my Lord, whose thoughts were evidently on some other track.

"Pure waste—nothing else; the place never could pay. Vines and fig-trees, indeed—I'd rather see a crop of oats."

"I have a weakness for the picturesque, I must own," said my Lord, as his eyes still followed the retreating figures of the girls.

"Well, I like a waterfall; and, indeed, I like a summer-house myself," said O'Reilly, as though confessing to a similar trait on his own part.

"This is the first time you have been abroad, O'Reilly?" said his Lordship, to turn the subject of the conversation.

"Yes, my Lord, my first, and, with God's blessing, my last, too! When I lost Mrs. O'Reilly, two years ago, of a complaint that beat all the doctors——"

"Ah, yes, you mentioned that to me; very singular, indeed!"

"For it wasn't in the heart itself, my Lord, but in the bag that houlds it."

"Oh yes, I remember the explanation perfectly; so you thought you'd just come abroad for a little distraction."

"Distraction indeed! 'tis the very word for it," broke in Mr. O'Reilly, eagerly. "My head is bewildered between the lingo and the money, and they keep telling me, 'You'll get used to it, papa, darling—you'll be quite at home yet.' But how is that ever possible?"

"Still, for your charming girls' sake," said my Lord, caressing his whiskers and adjusting his neckcloth, as if for immediate captivation—"for their sake, O'Reilly, you've done perfectly right!"

"Well, I'm glad your Lordship says so. 'Tis nobody ought to know better!" said he, with a heavy sigh.

"They really deserve every cultivation. All the advantages that—that sort of thing can bestow!"

And his Lordship smiled benignly, as though offering his own aid to the educational system.

"What they said to me was this," said O'Reilly, dropping his voice to a tone of the most confiding secrecy; "'Don't be keeping them down here in Mary's Abbey, but take them where they'll see life. You can give them forty thousand pounds between them, Tim O'Reilly, and with that and their own good looks——'"

"Beauty, O'Reilly—downright loveliness," broke in my Lord.

"Well, indeed they are handsome," said O'Reilly, with an honest satisfaction, "and that's exactly why I thought the advice was good. 'Take them abroad,' they said; 'take them into Germany and Italy—but more especially Italy'—for they say there's nothing like Italy for finishing young ladies."

"That is certainly the general impression!" said his Lordship, with the barest imaginable motion of his nether lip.

"And here we are, but where we're going afterwards, and what we'll do when we're there, that thief of a Courier we have may know, but I don't."

"So that you gave up business, O'Reilly, and resigned yourself freely to a life of ease," said my Lord, with a smile that seemed to approve the project.

"Yes, indeed, my Lord; but whether it's to be a life of pleasure, I don't know. I was in the provision trade thirty-eight years, and do you know I miss the pigs greatly."

"Every man has a hankering of that sort. Old cosmopolite as I am, I have every now and then my longing for that window at Brookes's, and that snug dinner-room at Boodle's."

"Yes, my Lord," said O'Reilly, who had'nt the faintest conception whether these localities were not situated in China.

"Ah, Twining, never thought to see you here," called out his Lordship to a singularly tall man, who came forward with such awkward contortions of legs and arms, as actually to suggest the notion that he was struggling against somebody. Mr. O'Reilly modestly stole away while the friends were shaking hands, and we take the same opportunity to present the new arrival to our reader.

Mr. Adderley Twining was a gentleman of good family and very large fortune, whose especial pleasure it was to pass off to the world for a gay, light-hearted, careless creature, of small means, and most lavish liberality. To be, in fact, perpetually struggling between a most generous temperament and a narrow purse. His cordiality was extreme, his politeness unbounded; and as he was most profuse in his pledges for the present and his promises for the future, he attained to a degree of popularity which to his own estimation was immense. This was, in fact, the one sole self-deception of his very crafty nature, and the belief that he was a universal favourite was the solitary mistake of this shrewd intelligence. Although a married man, there was so constantly some "difficulty" or other—these were his own words—about Lady Grace, that they seldom were seen together; but he spoke of her when absent in terms of the most fervent affection, but whose health, or spirits, or tastes, or engagements unhappily denied her the happiness of travelling along with him. Whenever it chanced that they were together, he scarcely mentioned her.

"And what breeze of fortune has wafted you here, Twining?" said his Lordship, delighted to chance upon a native of his own world.

"Health, my Lord—health," said he, with one of his ready laughs, as though everything he said or thought had some comic side in it that amused him, "and a touch of economy too, my Lord."

"What humbug all that is, Twining. Who the deuce is so well off as yourself?" said Lord Lackington, with all that peculiar bitterness with which an embarrassed man listens to the grumbings of a wealthy one.

"Only too happy, my Lord—rejoiced if you were right,

Capital news for me, eh?—excellent news!” And he slapped his lean legs with his long thin fingers, and laughed immoderately.

“Come, come, we all know that—besides a devilish good thing of your own—you got the Wrexley estate, and old Poole’s Dorsetshire property. Hang me if I ever open a newspaper without reading that you are somebody’s residuary legatee.”

“I assure you solemnly, my Lord, I am actually hard up, pressed for money, downright inconvenienced.” And he laughed again, as though it were uncommonly droll.

“Stuff—nonsense!” said my Lord, angrily, for he really was losing temper; and to change the topic he curtly asked, “And where do you mean to pass the winter?”

“In Florence, my Lord, or Naples. We have a little den in both places.”

The “den” in Florence was a sumptuous palace on the Arno. Its brother at Naples was a royal villa near Posilippo.

“Why not Rome? Lady Lackington and myself mean to try Rome.”

“Ah, all very well for you, my Lord, but for people of small fortune——”

There was that in the expression of his Lordship’s face that told Twining this vein might be followed too far, and so he stopped in time, and laughed away pleasantly.

“Spicer tells me,” resumed Lord Lackington, “that Florence is quite deserted; nothing but a kind of second and third rate set of people go there. Is that so?”

“Excellent people, capital society, great fun!” said Twining, in a burst of merriment.

“Spicer calls them ‘Snobs,’ and he ought to know.”

“So he ought, indeed, my Lord—no one better. Admirably observed, and very just.”

“He’s in training again for that race that never comes off,” said his Lordship. “The first time I ever saw him—it was at Leamington—and he was performing the same farce, with hot baths and blankets, and jotting down imaginary bets in a small note-book.”

“How good—capital! Your Lordship has him perfectly—you know him thoroughly—great fun! Spicer, excellent creature!”

“How those fellows live is a great mystery to me. You chance upon them everywhere, in Baden or Aix in summer, in Paris or Vienna during the Winter. Now if they were amusing rogues, like that fellow I met at your house in Hampshire——”

"Oh, Stockley, my Lord; rare fellow, quite a genius!" laughed Twining.

"Just so—Stockley; one would have them just to help over the boredom of a country house; but this creature Spicer is as devoid of amusing gifts, as tiresome, and as worn out, as if he owned ten thousand a year."

"How good, by Jove!" cried Twining, in ecstasy. And he slapped his gaunt limbs and threw his long arms wildly about in a transport of delight.

"And who are here, Twining—any of our set?"

"Not a soul, my Lord; the place isn't known yet, that's the reason I came here—so quiet and so cheap, make your own terms with them. Good fun—excellent!"

"I came to meet a man of business," said his Lordship, with a strong emphasis on the pronoun. "He couldn't prolong his journey farther south, and so we agreed to rendezvous here."

"I have a little affair also to transact—a mere trifle, a nothing in fact—with a lawyer, who promises to meet me here by the end of the month, so that we have just time to take our baths, drink the waters, and all that sort of thing, while we are waiting."

And he rubbed his hands, and laughed away again.

"What a boon for my wife to learn that Lady Grace is here! She was getting so hippped with the place—not so much the place as the odious people—that I suspect she'd have left me to wait for Dunn all alone."

"Dunn! Dunn! not Davenport Dunn?" exclaimed Twining.

"The very man—do you know him?"

"To be sure, he's the fellow I'm waiting for. Capital fun, isn't it?"

And he slapped his legs again, while he repeated the name of Dunn over and over again.

"I want to know something about this same Mr. Dunn," said Lord Lackington, confidentially.

"So do I; like it of all things," cried Twining. "Clever fellow—wonderful fellow—up to everything—acquainted with everybody. Great fun!"

"He occupies a very distinguished position in Ireland, I fancy," said his Lordship, with such a marked stress on the locality as to show that such did not constitute an imperial reputation.

"Yes, yes, man of the day there; do what he likes; very popular—immensely popular!" said Twining, as he laughed on.

"So that you know no more of him than his public repute—no more than I know myself," said his Lordship.

"Not so much as your Lordship, I'm certain," said Twining, as though it would have been unbecoming in him to do so; "in fact, my business transactions are such mere nothings, that it's quite a kindness on his part to undertake them—trifles, no more!"

And Twining almost hugged himself in the ecstasy which his last words suggested.

"*Mine*," said Lord Lackington, haughtily, "are of consequence enough to fetch him hither—a good thousand miles away from England; but he is pretty certain of its being well worth his while to come."

"Quite convinced of that—could swear it," said Twining, eagerly.

"Here are a mob of insufferable bores," said his Lordship, testily, as a number of people were heard approaching, for somehow—it is not easy to say exactly why—he had got into a train of thought that seemed to worry him, and was not disposed to meet strangers; and so, with a brief gesture of good-by to Twining, he turned into a path and disappeared.

Twining looked after him for a second or two, and then slapping his legs, he muttered, pleasantly, "What fun!" and took the road towards the house.

CHAPTER II.

HOW TWO "FINE LADIES" PASS THE MORNING.

IN a room of moderate size, whose furniture was partly composed of bygone finery and some articles of modern comfort—a kind of compromise between a Royal residence and a Hydropathic establishment—sat two ladies at an open window, which looked out upon a small terrace above the lake. The view before them could scarcely have been surpassed in Europe. Enclosed, as in a frame, between the snow-clad Alps and the wooded mountains of the Brianza, lay the lake, its shores one succession of beautiful villas, whose gardens descended to the very water. Although the sun was high, the great mountains threw the shadows half way across the lake; and in the dim depth of shade, tower and crag, battlement and precipice, were strangely intermixed, giving to the picture a mysterious grandeur that contrasted strongly with the bright reality of the opposite shore, where fruit and flowers, gay tapestries from casements, and floating banners, added colour to the scene.

Large white-sailed boats stole peacefully along, loaded, half-mast high, with water melons and garden stores; the golden produce glittering in the sun, and glowing in the scarcely rippled water beneath them, while the low chant of the boatmen floated softly and lazily through the air—meet sounds in a scene where all seemed steeped in a voluptuous repose.

The two ladies whom we have mentioned were not impassioned spectators of the scene. Whenever their eyes ranged over it, no new brilliancy awoke in them, no higher colour tinged their cheek. One was somewhat advanced in life, but with many traces of beauty, and an air which denoted a lifelong habit of homage and deference. There was that in her easy, lounging attitude, and the splendour of her dress, which seemed to intimate that Lady Lackington would still be graceful, and even

extravagant, though there were none to admire the grace or be dazzled by the costliness. Her companion, though several years younger, looked, from the effects of delicate health and a suffering disposition, almost of her own age. She, too, was handsome; but it was a beauty which so much depended on tint and colour, that her days of indisposition left her almost bereft of good looks. All about her, her low, soft voice, her heavily raised eyelids, her fair and blue-veined hands, the very carriage of her head, pensively thrown forwards, were so many protestations of one who asked for sympathy and compassion; and who, whether with reason or without, firmly believed herself the most unhappy creature in existence.

If there was no great similarity of disposition to unite them, there was a bond fully as strong. They were both English of the same order, both born and bred up in a ritual that dictates its own notions of good or bad, of right and wrong, of well-bred and vulgar, of riches and poverty. Given any person in society, or any one event of their lives, and these two ladies' opinion upon either would have been certain to harmonise and agree. The world for them had but one aspect; for the simple reason, that they had always seen it from the one same point of view. They had not often met; they had seen very little of each other for years; but the freemasonry of class supplied all the place of affection, and they were as fond and as confiding as though they were sisters.

"I must say," said the Viscountess, in a tone full of reprobation, "that is shocking—actually shameful; and, in *your* place, I'd not endure it!"

"I have become so habituated to sorrow," sighed Lady Grace——

"That you will sink under it at last, my dear, if this man's cruelties be not put an end to. You really must allow me to speak to Lackington."

"It wouldn't be of the slightest service, I assure you. In the first place he is so plausible, he'd persuade any one that there was nothing to complain of, that he lived up to his fortune, that his means were actually crippled; and secondly, he'd give such pledges for the future, such promises, that it would be downright rudeness to throw a doubt on their sincerity."

"Why did you marry him, my dear?" said Lady Lackington, with a little sigh.

"I married him to vex Ridout; we had a quarrel at that *fête* at Chiswick, you remember, Tollertin's *fête*. Ridout was poor,

and felt his poverty. I don't believe I treated his scruples quite fairly. I know I owed to him that I had no contempt for riches—that I thought Belgrave-square, and the Opera, and Diamonds, and a smart Equipage, all very commendable things: and Jack said, 'Then, there's your man. Twining has twenty thousand a year.' 'But, he has not asked me,' said I, laughing. Ridout turned away without a word. Half an hour later, Mr. Adderley Twining formally proposed for my hand, and was accepted."

"And Jack Ridout is now the Marquis of Allerton," said Lady Lackington.

"I know it!" said the other, bitterly.

"With nigh forty thousand a year."

"I know it!" cried she, again.

"And the handsomest house and the finest park in England."

The other burst into tears, and hid her face between her hands.

"There's a fate in these things, my dear," said Lady Lackington, with a slight paleness creeping over her cheek. "That's all we can say about them."

"What have you done with that sweet place in Hampshire?"

"Dingley? It is let to Lord Mauley."

"And you had a house in St. James's-square."

"It is Burrage's Hotel, now."

Lady Lackington fanned her swarthy face for some seconds, and then said, "And how did you come here?"

"We saw—that is, Twining saw—an advertisement of this new establishment in the *Galvani*. We had just arrived at Liège, when he discovered a vetturino returning to Milan with an empty carriage; he accordingly bargained with him to take us on here—I forget for what sum—so that we left our own carriage, and half my luggage, at the Pavilion Hotel, and set off on our three weeks' journey. We have been three weeks all but two days on the road! My maid of course refused to travel in this fashion, and went back to Paris. Courcel, his own man, rebelled too, which Twining, I must say, seemed overjoyed at, and gave him such a character for honesty in consequence, as he never could have hoped for; and so we came on, with George the footman, and a Belgian creature I picked up at the hotel, who, except to tear out my hair when she brushes it, and bruise me whenever she hooks a dress, has really no other gift under heaven."

"And you actually came all this way by vetturino?"

Lady Grace nodded a sad assent, and sighed deeply.

"What does he mean by it, my dear? The man must have some deep, insidious design in all this;—don't you think so?"

"I think so myself, sometimes," replied she, sorrowfully. And now their eyes met, and they remained looking steadily at each other for some seconds. Whatever Lady Grace's secret thoughts, or whatever the dark piercing orbs of her companion served to intimate, true is it that she blushed till her cheek became crimson; and as she rose, and walked out upon the terrace, her neck was a-flame with the emotion.

"He never married?" said Lady Lackington.

"No!" said Lady Grace, without turning her head. And there was a silence on both sides.

Oh dear! how much of the real story of our lives passes without expression—how much of the secret mechanism of our hearts moves without a sound in the machinery!

"Poor fellow!" said Lady Lackington, at last, "his lot is just as sad as your own. I mean," added she, "that he feels it so."

There was no answer, and she resumed. "Not but men generally treat these things lightly enough. They have their clubs, and their Houses of Parliament, and their shooting. Are you ill, dearest?" cried she, as Lady Grace tottered feebly back and sank into a chair.

"No," said she, in a faint voice, "I'm only tired!" And there was an inexpressible melancholy in the tone as she spoke it.

"And I'm tired too!" said Lady Lackington, drearily. "There is a tyranny in the routine of these places quite insupportable—the hours, the discipline, the diet, and, worse than all, the dreadful people one meets with." Though Lady Grace did not seem very attentive, this was a theme the speaker loved to improve, and so she proceeded to discuss the house and its inhabitants in all freedom. French, Russians, and Italians—all were passed in review, and very smartly criticised, till she arrived at "those atrocious O'Reillys, that my Lord will persist in threatening to present to me. Now one knows horrid people when they are very rich, or very well versed in some speculation or other—mines, or railroads, or the like—and when their advice is so much actual money in your pocket—just, for instance, as my Lord knows that Mr. Davenport Dunn——"

"Oh! he's a great ally of Mr. Twining; at least, I have heard his name a hundred times in connexion with business matters."

"You never saw him?"

"No."

"Nor I, but once; but I confess to have some curiosity to know him. They tell me he can do anything he pleases with each House of Parliament, and has no inconsiderable influence in a sphere yet higher. It is quite certain that the old Duke of Wycombe's affairs were all set to rights by his agency, and Lady Muddleton's divorce bill was passed by his means."

The word "divorce" seemed to rally Lady Grace from her fit of musing, and she said, "Is that certain?"

"Julia herself says so, that's all. He got a bill, or an act, or a clause, or whatever you call it, inserted, by which she succeeded in her suit, and she is now as free—as free——"

"As I am not!" broke in Lady Grace, with a sad effort at a smile.

"To be sure, there is a little scandal in the matter, too. They say that old Lord Brookdale was very soft himself in that quarter."

"The Chancellor!" exclaimed Lady Grace.

"And why not, dear? You remember the old refrain, 'No age, no station'—what is it?—and the next line goes—'To sovereign beauty mankind bends the knee.' Julia is rather proud of the triumph herself; she says it is like a victory in China, where the danger is very little and the spoils considerable!"

"Mr. Spicer, my Lady," said a servant, entering, "wishes to know if your Ladyship will receive him."

"Not this morning; say I'm engaged at present. Tell him—— But perhaps you have no objection—shall we have him in?"

"Just as you please. I don't know him."

Lady Lackington whispered a word or two, and then added aloud, "And one always finds them 'useful,' my dear!"

Mr. Spicer, when denuded of top-coat, cap, and woollen wrapper, as we saw him last, was a slightly made man, middle-sized, and middle-aged, with an air sufficiently gentlemanlike to pass muster in any ordinary assemblage. To borrow an illustration from the pursuits he was versed in, he bore the same relation to a man of fashion that a "weed" does to a "winner of the Derby"—that is to say, to an uneducated eye, there would have seemed some resemblance; and just as the "weed" counterfeits the racer in a certain loose awkwardness of stride and an ungainly show of power, so did he appear to have certain characteristics of a class that he merely mixed with on sufferance, and imitated in some easy "externals." The

language of any profession is, however, a great leveller; and whether the cant be of the "House," Westminster Hall, the College of Physicians, the Mess Table, or the "Turf," it is exceedingly difficult at first blush to distinguish the real practitioner from the mere pretender. Now Spicer was what is called a Gentleman Rider, and he had all the slang of his craft, which is, more or less, the slang of men who move in a very different sphere.

As great landed proprietors of ambitious tendencies will bestow a qualification to sit in Parliament upon some man of towering abilities and small fortune, so did certain celebrities of the Turf confer a similar social qualification on Spicer; and by enabling him to "associate with the world," empower themselves to utilise his talents and make use of his capabilities. In this great Parliament of the Field, therefore, Spicer sat; and though for a very small and obscure borough, yet he had his place, and was "ready when wanted."

"How d'ye do, Spicer?" said Lady Lackington, arranging the folds of her dress as he came forward, and intimating by the action that he was not to delude himself into any expectation of touching her hand. "My Lord told me you were here."

Spicer bowed, and muttered, and looked, as though he were waiting to be formally presented to the other lady in company; but Lady Lackington had not the most remote intention of bestowing on him such a mark of recognition, and merely answered the mute appeal of his features by a dry "Won't you sit down?"

And Mr. Spicer did sit down, and of a verity his position denoted no excess of ease or enjoyment. It was not that he did not attempt to appear perfectly at home, that he did not assume an attitude of the very calmest self-possession, maybe he even passed somewhat the frontier of lackadaisical territory he assumed, for he slapped his boot with his whip in a jaunty affectation of indifference.

"Pray, don't do that!" said Lady Lackington; "it worries one!"

He desisted, and a very awkward silence of some seconds ensued; at length she said, "There was something or other I wanted to ask you about; you can't help me to it, can you?"

"I'm afraid not, my Lady. Was it anything about sporting matters?"

"No, no; but now that you remind me, all that information you gave me about Glaucus was wrong, he came in 'a bad third.'

My Lord laughed at me for losing my money on him, and said he was the worst horse of the lot."

"Very sorry to differ with his Lordship," said Spicer, deferentially, "but he was the favourite up to Tuesday evening, when Scott declared that he'd win with Rig the Market. I then tried to get four to one on Flycatcher, to square your book, but the stable was nobbled."

"Did you ever hear such jargon, my dear?" said Lady Lackington. "You don't understand one syllable of it, I'm certain."

Spicer smirked and made a slight approach to a bow, as though even this reference to him would serve for an introduction; but Lady Grace met the advance with a haughty stare and a look, that said, as plainly as any words, "At your peril, Sir?"

"Well, one thing is certain!" said Lady Lackington, "nothing that you predicted turned out afterwards. Glaucus was beaten, and I lost my three hundred pounds—only fancy, dearest, three hundred pounds, with which one could do so many things! I wanted it in fifty ways, and I never contemplated leaving it with the legs at Newmarket."

"Not the legs, I assure you, my lady—not the legs. I made your book with Colonel Stamford and Gore Middleton——"

"As if I cared who won it!" said she, haughtily.

"I never knew that you tempted fortune in this fashion!" said Lady Grace, languidly.

"I do so very rarely, my dear. I think Mining Shares are better, or Guatemala State Bonds. I realised very handsomely indeed upon them two years ago. To be sure it was Dunn that gave me the hint: he dined with us at the Hôtel de Windsor, and I asked him to pay a small sum for me to Hore's people, and when I counted the money out to him, he said, 'Why not buy in some of those Guanaxualo shares; they'll be up to——'—I forget what he said—'before a month. Let Storr wait, and you'll pay him in full.' And he was quite right, as I told you. I realised about eight hundred pounds on my venture."

"If Glaucus had won, my Lady——"

"Don't tell me what I should have gained," broke she in. "It only provokes one the more, and above all, Spicer, no more information. I detest 'information.' And now, what was it I had to say to you; really *your* memory would seem to be failing you completely. What could it be?"

"It couldn't be that roan filly——"

"Of course it couldn't. I really must endeavour to persuade you that my thoughts occasionally stray beyond the stable. By the way, you sold those grey carriage horses for nothing. You always told me they were the handsomest pair in London, and yet you say I'm exceedingly lucky to get one hundred and eighty pounds for them."

"You forget, my Lady, that Bloomfield was a roarer——"

"Well, you really are in a tormenting mood this morning, Spicer. Just bethink you, now, if there's anything more you have to say, disagreeable and unpleasant, and say it at once; you have made Lady Grace quite ill——"

"No, only tired!" sighed her friend, with a melancholy smile.

"Now I remember," cried Lady Lackington, "it was about that house at Florence. I don't think we shall pass any time there, but in case we should, I should like that Zapponi palace, with the large terrace on the Arno, and there must be no one on the ground-floor, mind that; and I'll not give more than I gave formerly—perhaps not so much. But, above all, remember, that if we decide to go on to Rome, that I'm not bound to it in the least, and he must new-carpet that large drawing-room, and I must have the little boudoir hung in blue, with muslin over it, not pink. Pink is odious, except in a dressing-room. You will yourself look to the stables; they require considerable alteration, and there's something about the dining-room—what was it?—Lord Lackington will remember it. But perhaps I have given you as many directions as your head will bear."

"I almost think so too, my Lady," muttered he, with a half-sogged look.

"And be sure, Spicer, that we have that cook—Antoine—if we should want him. Don't let him take a place till we decide where we shall stop."

"You are aware that he insists on a hundred and fifty francs a month, and his wine."

"I should like to know what good you are, if I am to negotiate with these creatures myself!" said she, haughtily. "I must say, Lady Grace will suspect that I have rather overrated your little talents, Spicer." And Lady Grace gave a smile that might mean any amount of approval or depreciation required. "I shall not want that saddle now, and you must make that man take it back again."

"But I fear, my Lady——"

"There, don't be tiresome! What is that odious bell? Oh, it's the dinner of these creatures. You dine at the table d'hôte,

I think, so pray don't let us keep you. You can drop in to-morrow. Let me see, about two, or half-past. Good-by—good-by."

And so Mr. Spicer retired. The bow Lady Grace vouchsafed being in reality addressed rather to one of the figures on her fan than to himself.

"One gets a habit of these kind of people," said Lady Lackington, as the door closed after him; "but really it is a bad habit."

"I think so too," said Lady Grace, languidly.

"To be sure, there are now and then occasions when you can't employ exactly a servant. There are petty negotiations which require a certain delicacy of treatment, and there, they are useful. Besides," said she, with a half-sneering laugh, "there's a fashion in them, and, like Blenheim spaniels, every one must have one, and the smaller the better!"

"Monsignore Clifford, my Lady, to know if you receive," said a servant, entering.

"Oh, certainly. I'm charmed, my dear Grace, to present to you the most agreeable man of all Rome. He is English, but 'went over,' as they call it, and is now high in the Pope's favour."

These words, hurriedly uttered as they were, had been scarcely spoken when the visitor entered the room. He was a tall, handsome man, of about five-and-thirty, dressed in deep black, and wearing a light blue ribbon across his white neckcloth. He advanced with all the ease of good breeding, and taking Lady Lackington's hand, he kissed the tips of her fingers with the polished grace of a courtier.

After a formal presentation to Lady Grace, he took a seat between the two ladies.

"I am come on, for *me*, a sad errand, my Lady," said he, in a voice of peculiar depth and sweetness, in which the very slightest trace of a foreign accent was detectible—"it is to say good-by!"

"You quite shock me, Monsignore. I always hoped you were here for our own time."

"I believed and wished it also, my Lady; but I have received a peremptory order to return to Rome. His Holiness desires to see me at once. There is some intention, I understand, of naming me as the Nuncio at Florence. Of course this is a secret as yet." And he turned to each of the ladies in succession.

"Oh, that would be charming—at least for any one happy enough to fix their residence there, and my friend Lady Grace is one of the fortunate."

Monsignore bowed in gratitude to the compliment, but contrived, as he bent his head, to throw a covert glance at his future neighbour, with the result of which he did not seem displeased.

"I must of course, then, send you back those interesting books, which I have only in part read?"

"By no means, my Lady; they are yours, if you will honour me by accepting them. If the subject did not forbid the epithet, I should call them trifles."

"Monsignore insists on my reading the 'Controversy,' dear Lady Grace: but how I am to continue my studies without his guidance——"

"We can correspond, my Lady," quickly broke in the other. "You can state to me whatever doubts—difficulties, perhaps, were, the better word—occur to you; I shall be but too happy and too proud to offer you the solution; and if my Lady Grace Twining would condescend to accept me in the same capacity——"

She bowed blandly, and he went on.

"There is a little tract here, by the Cardinal Balbi—'Flowers of St. Joseph' is the title. The style is simple but touching—the invitation' scarcely to be resisted.

"I think you told me I should like the Cardinal personally," broke in Lady Lackington.

"His Eminence is charming, my Lady—such goodness, such gentleness, and so much of the very highest order of conversational agreeability."

"Monsignore is so polite as to promise us introductions at Rome," continued she, addressing Lady Grace, "and amongst those, too, who **are never** approached by our countrymen."

"The Alterini, the Fornisari, the Balbetti," proudly repeated Monsignore.

"All ultra-exclusives, you understand," whispered Lady Lackington to her friend, "who wouldn't tolerate the English."

"How charming!" ejaculated Lady Grace, with a languid enthusiasm.

"The Roman nobility," continued Lady Lackington, "stands proudly forward, as the only society in Europe to which the travelling English cannot obtain access."

"They have other prejudices, my Lady—if I may so dare to call sentiments inspired by higher influences—than those which usually sway society. These prejudices are all in favour of such

as regard our Church, if not with the devotion of true followers, at least with the respect and veneration that rightfully attach to the first-born of Christianity."

"Yes," said Lady Lackington, as, though not knowing very well to what, she gave her assent, and then added, "I own to you I have always experienced a sort of awe—a sense of—what shall I call it?"

"Devotion, my Lady," blandly murmured Monsignore, while his eyes were turned on her with a paraphrase of the sentiment.

"Just so. I have always felt it on entering one of your churches—the solemn stillness, the gloomy indistinctness, the softened tints, the swelling notes of the organ—you know what I mean."

"And when such emotions are etherialised, when, rising above material influences, they are associated with thoughts of what is alone thought-worthy, with hopes of what alone dignifies hope, imagine, then, the blessed beatitude, the heavenly ecstasy they inspire."

Monsignore had now warmed to his work, and very ingeniously sketched out the advantages of a creed that accommodated itself so beautifully to every temperament—that gave so much and yet exacted so little—that poisoned no pleasures—discouraged no indulgences—but left every enjoyment open with its price attached to it, just as objects are ticketed in a bazaar. He had much to say, too, of its soothing consolations—its devices to alleviate sorrow and cheat affliction—while such was its sympathy for poor suffering humanity, that even the very caprices of temper—the mere whims of fancied depression—were not deemed unworthy of its pious care.

It is doubtful whether these ladies would have accorded to a divine of their own persuasion the same degree of favour and attention that they now bestowed on Monsignore Clifford. Perhaps his manner in discussing certain belongings of his Church was more entertaining; perhaps, too—we hint it with deference—that there was something like a forbidden pleasure in thus trespassing into the domain of Rome. His light and playful style was, however, a fascination amply sufficient to account for the interest he excited. If he dwelt but passingly on the dogmas of his Church, he was eloquently diffuse on its millinery. Copes, stoles, and vestments he revelled in; and there was a picturesque splendour in his description of ceremonial that left the best "effects" of the opera far behind. How gloriously, too, did he expatiate on the beauty of the Madonna, the costliness of

her gems, and the brilliancy of her diadem ! How incidentally did he display a rapturous veneration for loveliness, and a very pretty taste in dress ! In a word, as they both confessed, "he was charming." There was a downy softness in his enthusiasm, a sense of repose even in his very insistence, peculiarly pleasant to those who like to have their sensations, like their perfumes, as weak and as faint as possible.

"There is a tact and delicacy about these men from which our people might take a lesson," said Lady Lackington, as the door closed after him.

"Very true," sighed Lady Grace ; "ours are really dreadful."

CHAPTER III.

A FATHER AND A DAUGHTER.

A DREARY evening late in October, a cold thin rain falling, and a low wailing wind sighing through the leafless branches of the trees in Merrion-square, made Dublin seem as sad-looking and deserted as need be. The principal inhabitants had not yet returned to their homes for the winter, and the houses wore that melancholy look of vacancy and desertion so strikingly depressing. One sound alone awoke the echoes in that silence : it was a loud knocking at the door of a large and pretentious mansion in the middle of the north side of the square. Two persons had been standing at the door for a considerable time, and by every effort of knocker and bell endeavouring to obtain admittance. One of these was a tall, erect man of about fifty, whose appearance but too plainly indicated that most painful of all struggles between poverty and a certain pretension. White-seamed and threadbare as was his coat, he wore it buttoned to the top with a sort of military smartness, his shabby hat was set on with a kind of jaunty air, and his bushy whiskers, combed and frizzed out with care, seemed a species of protest against being thought as humble as certain details of dress might bespeak him. At his side stood a young girl, so like him that a mere glance proclaimed her to be his daughter, and although in her appearance also narrow means stood confessed, there was an unmistakable something in her calm, quiet features, and her patient expression, that declared she bore her lot with a noble and high-hearted courage.

"One trial more, Bella, and I'll give it up," cried he, angrily, as, seizing the knocker, he shook the strong door with the rapping, while he jingled the bell with equal violence. "If they don't come now, it is because they've seen who it is, or maybe——"

"There, see, papa, there's a window opening above," said the girl, stepping out into the rain as she spoke.

"What d'ye mean, do ye want to break in the door?" cried a harsh voice, as the wizened, hag-like face of a very dirty old woman appeared from the third story.

"I want to know if Mr. Davenport Dunn is at home," cried the man.

"He is not; he's abroad—in France."

"When is he expected back?" asked he again.

"Maybe in a week, maybe in three weeks."

"Have any letters come for Mr. Kellett?—Captain Kellett"—said he, quickly correcting himself.

"No!"

And a bang of the window as the head was withdrawn, finished the colloquy.

"That's pretty conclusive any way, Bella," said he, with an attempt to laugh. "I suppose there's no use in staying here longer. Poor child," added he, as he watched her preparations against the storm, "you'll be wet to the skin! I think we must take a car, eh, Bella? I *will* take a car." And he put an emphasis on the word that sounded like a firm resolve.

"No, no, papa; neither of us ever feared rain."

"And, by George! it can't spoil our clothes, Bella," said he, laughing with a degree of jocularly that sounded astonishing even to himself, for he quickly added, "but I *will* have a car; wait a moment here under the porch and I'll get one."

And before she could interpose a word, he was off and away at a speed that showed the vigour of a younger man.

"It won't do, Bella," he said, as he came back again; "there's only one fellow on the stand, and he'll not go under half-a-crown. I pushed him hard for one and sixpence, but he'd not hear of it, and so I thought—that was, I knew well—you would be angry with me."

"Of course, papa; it would be mere waste of money," said she, hastily. "An hour's walk—at most an hour and a half—and there's an end of it. And now let us set out, for it is growing late."

There were few in the street as they passed along; a stray creature or so, houseless and ragged, shuffled onward; an odd loiterer stood for shelter in an archway, or a chance passer-by, with ample coat and umbrella, seemed to defy the pelting storm, while cold and dripping they plodded along in silence.

"That's old Barrington's house, Bella," said he, as they

passed a large and dreary-looking mansion at the corner of the square; "many's the pleasant evening I spent in it."

She muttered something, but inaudibly, and they went on as before.

"I wonder what's going on here to-day. It was Sir Dyke Morris used to live here when I knew it." And he stopped at an open door, where a flood of light poured forth into the street. "That's the Bishop of Derry, Bella, that's just gone in. There's a dinner-party there to-day," whispered he, as, half reluctant to go, he still peered into the hall.

She drew him gently forward, and he seemed to have fallen into a reverie, as he muttered at intervals,

"Great times—fine times—plenty of money—and fellows that knew how to spend it!"

Drearily plashing onward through wind and rain, their frail clothes soaked through, they seldom interchanged a word.

"Lord Drogheda lived there, Bella," said he, stopping short at the door of a splendidly illuminated hotel; "and I remember the time I was as free and welcome in it as in my own house. My head used to be full of the strange things that happened there once. Brown, and Barry Fox, and Tisdall, and the rest of us, were wild chaps! Faith, my darling, it wasn't for Mr. Davenport Dunn I cared in those times, or the like of him. Davenport Dunn, indeed!"

"It is strange that he has not written to us," said the girl in a low voice.

"Not a bit strange; it's small trouble he takes about us. I'll bet a five-pound note—I mean, I'll lay sixpence," said he, correcting himself with some confusion—"that since he left this he never as much as bestowed a thought on us. When he got me that beggarly place in the Custom House, he thought he'd done with me out and out. Sixty pounds a year! God be with the time I gave Peter Harris, the butler, just double the money!"

As they talked thus they gained the outskirts of the city, and gradually left the lamps and the well-lighted shops behind. Their way now led along a dreary road by the sea-side, towards the little bathing village of Clontarf, beyond which, in a sequestered spot called the Green Lanes, their humble home stood. It was a long and melancholy walk; the sorrowful sounds of the sea beating on the shingly strand mingling with the dreary plashing of the rain, while farther out, a continuous roar as the waves rolled over the "North Bull," added all the terrors of storm to the miseries of the night.

"The winter is setting in early," said Kellett. "I think I never saw a severer night."

"A sad time for poor fellows out at sea!" said the girl, as she turned her head towards the dreary waste of cloud and water now commingled into one.

"'Tis exactly like our own life, out there," cried he; "a little glimpse of light glimmering every now and then through the gloom, but yet not enough to cheer the heart and give courage; but all black darkness on every side."

"There will come a daybreak at last," said the girl, assuredly.

"Faith! I sometimes despair about it in our own case," said he, sighing drearily. "To think of what I was once, and what I am now! buffeted about and ill used by a set of scoundrels that I'd not have suffered to sit down in my kitchen. Keep that rag of a shawl across your chest; you'll be destroyed entirely, Bella."

"We'll soon be within shelter now, and nothing the worse for this weather either of us," replied she, almost gaily. "Over and over again have you told me what severe seasons you have braved in the hunting-field; and, after all, papa, one can surely endure as much for duty as in pursuit of pleasure—not to say that our little cottage never looks more home-like than after a night like this."

"It's snug enough for a thing of the kind," murmured he, half reluctantly.

"And Betty will have such a nice fire for us, and we shall be as comfortable and as happy as though it were a fine house, and we ourselves fine folk to live in it."

"The Kelleths of Kellett's Court, and no better blood in Ireland," said he, sternly. "It was in the same house my grandfather, Morgan Kellett, entertained the Duke of Portland, the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland; and this day, as I stand here, there isn't a chap in the Castle-yard would touch his hat to me!"

"And what need have we of them, papa? Will not our pride of good blood teach us other lessons than repining? Can't we show the world that a gentleman born bears his altered fortunes with dignity?"

"Ye're right, Bella, that's the very thing they must acknowledge. There isn't a day passes that I don't make the clerks in the 'Long Room' feel the difference between us. 'No liberties—no familiarities, my lads,' I say, 'keep your distance. For though my coat is thread-bare, and my hat none of the best, the man inside there is Paul Kellett of Kellett's Court.' And if

they ask where that is, I say, 'Look at the Gazetteer'—its mighty few of them has their names there—'Kellett's Court, the ancient seat of the Kellett family, was originally built by Strongbow, Earl of Pembroke.'

"Well, here we are, papa, in a more humble home; but you'll see how cheery it will be."

And so saying, she pushed open a little wicket, and, passing through a small garden, gained the door of a little one-storied cottage, almost buried in honeysuckle.

"Yes, Betty, wet through!" said she, laughing, as the old woman held up her hands in horror; "but get papa his slippers and that warm dressing-gown, and I'll be back in a minute."

"Arrah! why didn't you take a car for her?" said the old woman, with that familiarity which old and tried service warrants. "Sure the child will get her death from this!"

"She wouldn't let me; she insisted on walking on her feet."

"Ayeh, ayeh!" muttered the crone, as she placed his slippers on the fender, "sure ye oughtn't to mind her. She'd get a fever rather than cost you a shilling. Look at the shoes she's wearin'."

"By the good day! you'll drive me mad—clean mad!" cried he, savagely. "Don't you know in your heart that we haven't got it? Devil a rap farthing; that we're as poor as a church mouse; that if it wasn't for this beggarly place——"

"Now, Betty," cried the girl, entering—"now for our tea, and that delicious potato-cake that I see browning there before the fire."

Poorly, even meanly, dressed as she was, there was in her that gentle look, and graceful, quiet bearing, that relieved the sombre aspect of a room which spoke but too plainly of narrow fortune; and as her father looked at her, the traces of recent displeasure passed from his face, and her eyes brightened up, while he said,

"You bring a blessing with the very sound of your voice, darling." And he kissed her twice as he spoke.

"It is so comfortable to be here, and so snug," said she, seating herself at his side, "and to know that to-morrow is Sunday, and that we have our holiday each of us. Come, papa, confess this little room and its bright fire are very cheery! And I have got a newspaper for you. I told Mrs. Hawksey there was nothing such a treat to you as a newspaper, and she gave me one."

"Ah! the *Trumpet of Liberty*," said he, opening it. "We'll

have it after tea, Bella. Is there anything about our own county in it—Cork, I mean?"

"I have not looked in it yet; but we'll go through it honestly, papa, for I know how conscientious you are not to lose a paragraph."

"'Tis that same makes a man agreeable in society. You know everything if you read the papers: accidents and marriages, the rate of the money-market, the state of the crops, who is dining with the Queen, and who is skating on the Serpentine, who is ruined at Newmarket, and who drowned at sea, and then all about the playhouses, and the wonderful panoramas; so that, let conversation turn how it will, you're ready for it, and that's the reason, Bella, you must go through every bit of it. It's like hunting, and the very field perhaps you don't try, is just the one you'd find a fox in!"

"Well, you'll see. I'll beat every cover for you!" said she, laughing; "and Mrs. Hawksey desires to have it back, for there is something about the Alderman having said or done—I don't know what or where."

"How I hate the very name of an Alderman!" said Kellett, peevishly; "regular vagabonds, with gilt coaches and red cloaks, running about prating of taxes and the pipe-water! The devil a thing I feel harder to bear in my poverty than to think you're a visiting governess in an Alderman's family. Paul Kellett's daughter a visiting governess!"

"And very proud am I to be thought equal to the charge," said she, resolutely—"not to say how grateful to you for having enabled me to undertake it."

"Myself in the Customs is nothing; that, I'd put up with. Many a reduced gentleman did the same. Sam Crozier was a marker at a billiard-table in Tralee, and Ennis Magrath was an overseer on the very road he used to drive his four-in-hand. 'Many a time,' says he, 'I cursed that fresh-broken stone, but I never thought I'd be measuring it!' 'Tis the Encumbered Court has brought us all down, Bella, and there's no disgrace in being ruined with thousands of others. Just begin with the sales of estates, and tell us who is next for sentence. God forgive me, but I feel a kind of pleasure in hearing that we're all swamped together."

The girl smiled as though the remark were merely uttered in levity and deserved no more serious notice, but a faint sigh, which she could not repress, betrayed the sorrow with which she had heard it.

She opened the paper and glanced at its contents. They were as varied and multifarious as are usually to be found in weekly "channels of information." What struck her, however, most, was the fact that, turn where she would, the name of Davenport Dunn was ever conspicuous. Sales of property displayed him as the chief creditor or petitioner; charities paraded him as the first among the benevolent; joint-stock companies exhibited him as their managing director; mines, and railroads, and telegraph companies, harbour committees, and boards of all kinds, gave him the honours of large type; while in the fashionable intelligence from abroad, his arrivals and departures were duly chronicled, and a letter of our own correspondent from Venice communicated the details of a farewell dinner given him, with a "Lord" in the chair, by a number of those who had so frequently partaken of his splendid hospitalities while he resided in that city.

"Well—well—well!" said Kellett, with a pause between each exclamation, "this is more than I can bear. Old Jerry Dunn's son—the brat of a boy I remember in the Charter School! He used to be sent at Christmas time up to Ely-place, when my father was in town, to get five shillings for a Christmas-box; and I mind well the day he was asked to stay and dine with my sister Matty and myself, and he taught us a new game with six little bits of sticks, how we were to do something, I forget what; but I know how it ended—he won every sixpence we had. Matty had half a guinea in gold and some tenpenny pieces, and I had, I think about, fifteen shillings, and sorrow a rap he left us; and worse still, I mortgaged my school maps, and got a severe thrashing for having lost them from old White in Jervas-street; and poor Matty's doll was confiscated in the same way, and carried off with a debt of three-and-fourpence on her head. God forgive him, but he gave us a sorrowful night, for we cried till daybreak."

"And did you like him as a playfellow?" asked she.

"Now that's the strangest thing of all," said Kellett, smiling. "Neither Matty nor myself liked him; but he got a kind of influence over us that was downright fascination. No matter what we thought of doing before he came, when he once set foot in the room everything followed his dictation. It wasn't that he was overbearing or tyrannical in the least, just as little could you say that he was insinuating or flattering, but somehow, by a kind of instinct, we fell into his ways, and worked out all his suggestions just as if we were mere agents of his

will. Resistance or opposition we never dreamed of while he was present; but after he was gone away, once or twice there came the thought that there was something very like slavery in all this submission, and we began to concert how we might throw off the yoke.

"‘I won’t play toll-bar any more,’ said I, resolutely; ‘all my pocket-money is sure to go before it is over.’

"‘And I,’ said Matty, ‘won’t have poor “Mopsy” tried for a murder again; every time she’s hanged, some of the wax comes off her neck.’

"We encouraged each other vigorously in these resolves, but before he was half an hour in the house ‘Mopsy’ had undergone the last sentence of the law, and I was insolvent."

"What a clever rogue he must have been!" said Bella, laughing.

"Wasn't he clever!" exclaimed Kellett. "You could not say how—nobody could say how—but he saw everything the moment he came into a new place, and marked every one's face, and knew, besides, the impression he made on them, just as if he was familiar with them for years."

"Did you continue to associate with him as you grew up?" asked she.

"No; we only knew each other as children. There was a distressing thing—a very distressing thing—occurred one day; I'm sure to this very hour I think of it with sorrow and shame, for I can't believe he had any blame in it. We were playing in a room next my father's study, and running every now and then into the study; and there was an old-fashioned penknife—a family relic, with a long bloodstone handle—lying on the table, and when the play was over, and Davy, as we called him, had gone home, this was missing. There was a search made for it high and low, for my father set great value on it. It was his great-great-grandmother's, I believe; at all events, no one ever set eyes on it afterwards, and nothing would persuade my father but that Davy stole it! Of course he never told us that he thought so, but the servant did, and Matty and myself cried two nights and a day over it, and got really sick.

"I remember well: I was working by myself in the garden, Matty was ill and in bed, when I saw a tall old man, dressed like a country shopkeeper, shown into the back parlour, where my father was sitting. There was a bit of the window open, and I could hear that high words were passing between them, and, as I thought, my father getting the worst of it, for the old fellow kept repeating, ‘You'll rue it, Mister Kellett—you'll rue

it yet!' And then my father said, 'Give him a good horse-whipping, Dunn; take my advice, and you'll spare yourself some sorrow, and save him from even worse hereafter.' I'll never forget the old fellow's face as he turned to leave the room. 'Davy will live to pay you off for this,' said he; 'and if *you're* not to the fore, it will be your children, or your children's children, will have to 'quit the debt!'

"We never saw Davy from that hour; indeed, we were strictly forbidden ever to utter his name, and it was only when alone together that Matty and I would venture to talk of him, and cry over—and many a time we did—the happy days when we had him for our playfellow. There was a species of martyrdom now, too, in his fate, that endeared him the more to our memories—every play he had invented, every spot he was fond of, every toy he liked, were hallowed to our minds like relics. At last poor Matty and I could bear it no longer, and we sat down and wrote a long letter to Davy, assuring him of our fullest confidence in his honour, and our broken-heartedness at separation from him. We inveighed stoutly against parental tyranny, and declared ourselves ready for open rebellion, if he, that was never deficient in a device, could only point out the road. We bribed a stable-boy, with all our conjoined resources of pocket-money, to convey the epistle, and it came back next morning to my father, enclosed in one from Davy himself, stating that he could never countenance acts of disobedience, or be any party to a system by which children should deceive their parents. I was sent off to a boarding-school the same week, and poor Matty committed to the charge of Miss Morse, a vinegar-faced old maid, that poisoned the eight best years of her life!"

"And when did you next hear of him?"

"Of Davy? Let me see: the next time I heard of him was when he attempted to enter college as a sizar, and failed. Somebody or other mentioned it at Kellett's Court, and said that old Dunn was half out of his mind, insisting that some injustice was dealt out to his son, and vowing he'd get the member for somewhere to bring the matter before Parliament. Davy was wiser, however; he persuaded his father that, by agitating the question, they would only give notoriety to what, if left alone, would speedily be forgotten; and Davy was right. I don't think there's three men now in the kingdom that remember one word about the sizarship, or if they do, that would be influenced by it in any dealings they might have with Mr. Davenport Dunn."

"What career did he adopt after that?"

"He became a tutor, I think, in Lord Glengariff's family. There was some scandal about him there—I forget it now—and then he went off to America, and spent some years there, and in Jamaica, where he was employed as an overseer, I think; but I can't remember it all. My own knowledge of him next was seeing the name 'D. Dunn, solicitor,' on a neat brass-plate in Tralee, and hearing that he was a very acute fellow in election contests, and well up to dealing with the priests."

"And now he has made a large fortune?"

"I believe you well; he's the richest man in Ireland. There's scarce a county he hasn't got property in. There's not a town, nor a borough, where he hasn't some influence, and in every class, too—gentry, clergy, shopkeepers, people: he has them all with him, and nobody seems to know how he does it."

"Pretty much, I suppose as he used to manage Aunt Matty and yourself long ago," said she, laughingly.

"Well, indeed, I suppose so," said he, with a half sigh; "and if it be, all I can say is, they'll be puzzled to find out his secret. He's the deepest fellow I ever heard or read of; for there he stands to-day, without name, family, blood, or station, higher than those that had them all—able to do more than them; and, what's stranger still, thought more about in England than the best man amongst us."

"You have given me quite an interest about him, papa; tell me, what is he like?"

"He's as tall as myself, but not so strongly built; indeed, he's slightly round-shouldered; he is dark in the complexion, and has the blackest hair and whiskers I ever saw, and rather good-looking than otherwise—a calm, cold, patient-looking face you'd call it; he speaks very little, but his voice is soft, and low, and deliberate, just like one that wouldn't throw away a word, and he never moves his hands or arms, but lets them hang down heavily at either side."

"And his eyes? Tell me of his eyes?"

"They're big, black, sleepy-looking eyes, seldom looking up, and never growing a bit brighter by anything that he says or hears about him. Indeed, any one seeing him for the first time would say, 'There's a man whose thoughts are many a mile away; he isn't minding what's going on about him here.' But that is not the case; there isn't a look, a stir, nor a gesture that he doesn't remark. There's not a chair drawn closer to another, not a glance interchanged, that he hasn't noticed;

and I've heard it said, 'Many wouldn't open a letter before him, he's so sure to guess the contents, from just reading the countenance.'

"The world is always prone to exaggerate such gifts," said she, calmly.

"So it may be, dear, but I don't fancy it could do so here. He's one of those men that, if he had been born to high station, would be a great politician, or a great general. You see that somehow, without any effort on his part, things come up just as he wished them. I believe, after all," said he, with a heavy sigh, "it's just luck! Whatever one man puts his hand to in this world goes on right and smoothly, and another has every mishap and misfortune that can befall him. He may strive, and toil, and fret his brains over it, but devil a good it is. If he is born to ill luck, it will stick to him!"

"It's not a very cheery philosophy!" said she, gently.

"I suppose not, dear; but what is very cheery in this life, when you come to find it out? Isn't it nothing but disappointment and vexation?"

Partly to rally him out of this vein of depression, and partly from motives of curiosity, she once more adverted to Dunn, and asked how it happened that they crossed each other again in life.

"He's what they call 'carrying the sale' of Kellett's Court, my dear. You know we're in the Encumbered Estates now; and Dunn represents Lord Lackington and others that hold the mortgages over us. The property was up for sale in November, then in May last, and was taken down by Dunn's order. I never knew why. It was then, however, he got me this thing in the Revenue—this beggarly place of sixty-five pounds a year; and told me, through his man Hanks—for I never met himself about it—that he'd take care my interests were not overlooked. After that the Courts closed, and he went abroad; and that's all there's between us, or, indeed, likely to be between us; for he never wrote me as much as one line since he went away, nor noticed any one of my letters, though I sent him four, or, indeed, I believe five."

"What a strange man this must be," said she, musingly. "Is it supposed that he has formed any close attachments? Are his friends devoted to him?"

"Attachments—friendships! faith, I'm inclined to think it's little time he'd waste on one or the other. Why, child, if what we hear be true, he goes through the work of ten men every day of his life."

"Is he married?" asked she, after a pause.

"No; there was some story about a disappointment he met early in life; when he was at Lord Glengariff's, I think, he fell in love with one of the daughters, or she with him—I never knew it rightly—but it ended in his being sent away; and they say he never got over it. Just as if Davenport Dunn was a likely man either to fall in love, or cherish the memory of a first passion! I wish you saw him, Bella," said he, laughing, "and the notion would certainly amuse you."

"But still men of his stamp have felt—ay, and inspired—the strongest passions. I remember reading once——"

"Reading, my darling—reading is one thing, seeing or knowing is another. The fellows that write these things must invent what isn't likely—what is nigh impossible—or nobody would read it. What we see of a man or woman in a book is just the exact reverse of what we'll ever find in real life."

The girl could easily have replied to this assertion—indeed, the answer was almost on her lips, when she restrained herself, and, hanging down her head, fell into a musing fit.

CHAPTER IV.

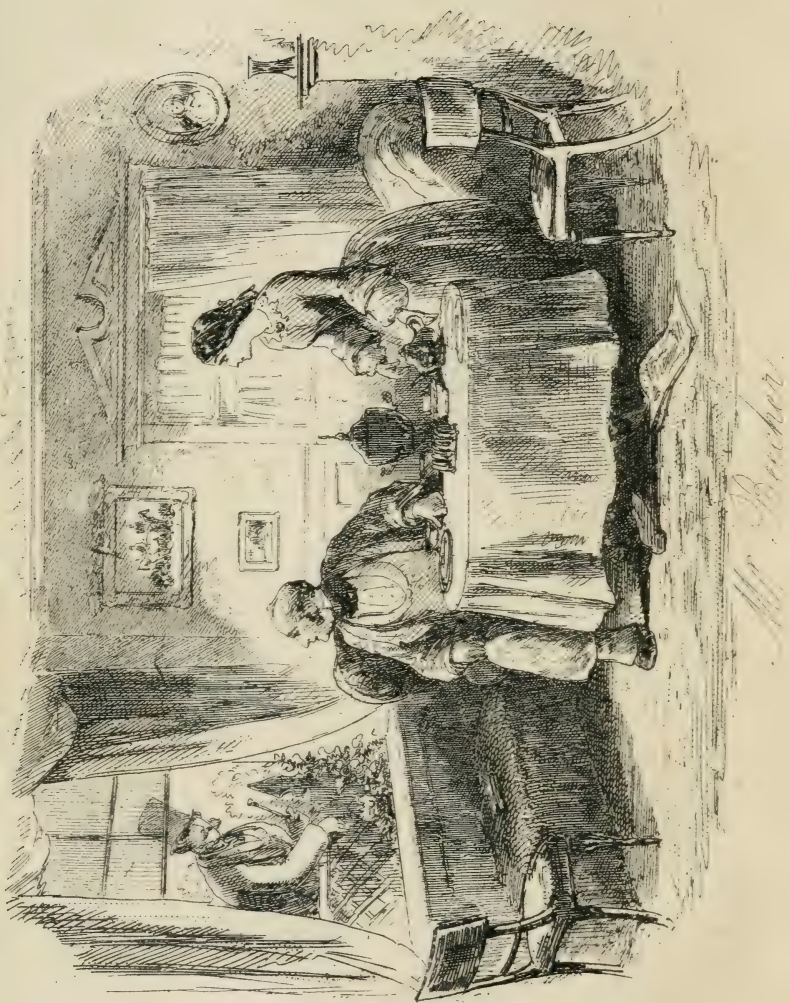
ONE WHO WOULD BE A "SHARP FELLOW."

ONE of the chief, perhaps the greatest, pleasures which Kellett's humble lot still secured him, was a long country walk of a Sunday in company with one who had been his friend in more prosperous times. A reduced gentleman like himself, Annesley Beecher could only go abroad on this one day in the week, and thus by the pressure of adverse fortune were they thrown more closely together.

Although by no means a favourite with Bella, she was far too considerate for her father, and too mindful of the few enjoyments that remained to him, ever to interpose her real opinion. She therefore limited herself to silence, as old Kellett would pronounce some glowing eulogy of his friend, calling him "good," and "amiable," and "kind-hearted," and extolling, as little short of miraculous, "the spirits he had, considering all he went through." But he would add, "He was always the same, and that's the reason everybody liked him; everybody, that is, almost everybody!" And he would steal a sly glance at his daughter, half imploringly, as though to say, "How long are you to sit in that small minority?"

Whether the weather would permit of Beecher's coming out to see them—whether he'd be able to "stay and take his bit of dinner with them," were subjects of as great anxiety to poor Kellett each succeeding Sunday morning as though there ever had been a solitary exception to the wished-for occurrence, and Bella would never destroy the pleasure of anticipation by the slightest hint that might impair the value he attached to the event.

"There's so many trying to get him," he would say; "they pester his life out with invitations. The Chancellor, and Lord Killybegs, and the Bishop of Drumsna, always asking him to



name his day; but he'd rather come out and take his bit of roast mutton with ourselver, and his glass of punch after it, than he'd eat venison and drink claret with the best of them. There's not a table in Dublin, from the Castle down, that wouldn't be proud of his company; and why not?" He would pause after uttering a challenge of this sort, and then, as his daughter would show no signs of acceptance, he would mutter on, "A real gentleman born and bred, and how anybody can *mislike* him is more than I am really able to comprehend!"

These little grumblings, which never produced more than a smile from Bella, were a kind of weekly homily, which poor Kellett liked to deliver, and he felt, when he had uttered it, as one who had paid a just tribute to worth and virtue.

"There's Beecher already, by Jove!" cried Kellett, as he sprang up from the breakfast-table to open the little wicket which the other was vainly endeavouring to unhasp. "How early he is."

Let us take the opportunity to present him to our readers—a duty the more imperative, since, to all outward semblance at least, he would appear little to warrant the flattering estimate his friend so lately bestowed upon him. About four or five-and-thirty, somewhat above the middle size, and with all the air and bearing of a man of fashion, Beecher had the gay, easy, light-hearted look of one with whom the world went habitually well; and when it did not, more was the shame of the said world! since a better, nobler, more generous fellow than himself never existed; and this *he* knew, however others might ungraciously hold an opposite opinion. There was not the slightest detail in his dress that could warrant the supposition of narrow fortune: his coat and his waistcoat of one colour and stuff were faultless in make, the massive watch-chain that festooned across his chest, in the last mode, his thick walking-boots the perfection of that compromise between strength and elegance so popular in our day, even to his cane, whose head was of massive gold, with his arms embossed—all bespoke a certain affluence and abundance, the more assured, from the absence of ostentation.

His hat was slightly, very slightly, set on one side, a piece of "tigerism" pardonable, perhaps, as it displayed the rich brown curls of very silky hair, which he had disposed with consummate skill before his glass ere he issued forth. His large, full blue eyes, his handsome mouth, and a certain gentleness in his look generally, were what he himself would have called the "odds in his favour;" and very hard it would indeed have been at first

sight to form an estimate in any way unfavourable to him. Beau Beecher, as he was called once, had been deemed the best-looking fellow about town, and when he entered the Life Guards, almost twenty years before the time we now present him, had been reckoned the handsomest man and best rider in the regiment. Brother of Lord Lackington, but not by the same mother, he had inaugurated that new school of dandyism which succeeded to the Brummell period, and sought fame and notoriety by splendour and extravagance, rather than by the fastidious and personal elegance that characterised the former era. In this way Lord Lackington and his brother were constantly contrasted, and although each had their followers, it was generally admitted that they were both regarded as admirable types of style and fashion. Boodle's would have preferred the Peer, the Guards' Club and all Tattersall's have voted for the Honourable Annesley Beecher.

Beecher started in life with all the advantages and disadvantages which attach to the position of a younger son of a noble family. On the one side he had good connexions, a sure status in society, and easy admission into club life; on the other, lay the counterbalancing fact of the very slender fortune which usually falls to the lot of the younger born. The sum, in his case, barely sufficed to carry him through his minority, so that the day he came of age he had not a shilling in the world. Most men open their career in life with some one ambition or other in their hearts. Some aspire to military glory and the fame of a great general, some, yearn after political eminence, and fashion to themselves the triumphs of successful statesmanship. There are lesser goals in the walks of the learned professions which have each their votaries; and sanguine spirits there are who found, in imagination, distant colonies beyond the sea, or lead lives of adventure in exploring unvisited and unknown regions. Annesley Beecher had no sympathy with any of these. The one great and absorbing wish of his heart was to be a "sharp fellow;" one who in all the dealings and traffic of life was sure to get the upper hand of his adversary, who, in every trial where craft was the master, and in whatever situation, wherein cunning performed a part, was certain to come out with the creditable reputation of being, "for a gentleman, the downiest cove to be met with anywhere."

This unhappy bent was owing to the circumstance of his being early thrown amongst men who, having nothing but their wits to depend upon, had turned these same wits to very dis-

creditable purposes. He became, it is needless to say, their easy dupe; and when utterly bereft of the small patrimony which he once possessed, was admitted as an humble brother of the honourable guild who had despoiled him.

Men select their walk in life either from the consciousness of certain qualities likely to attain success, or by some overweening admiration of those already eminent in it. It was this latter decided Beecher's taste. Never was there one who cherished such profound respect for a crafty fellow, for all other intellectual superiorities he could limit his esteem: for a rogue, his veneration was unbounded. From the man that invented a bubble company, to him who could turn the king at *écarté*—from the gifted individual who could puff up shares to an exorbitant value, to the no less fine intelligence that could "make everything safe on the Derby," he venerated them all. His early experiences had been unhappy ones, and so constantly had he found himself duped and "done" on every hand, that he ended by believing that honesty was a pure myth; the nearest approach to the quality being a certain kind of fidelity to one's "Pall," as he would have called it, and an unwillingness to put "your own friend in the hole," while there were so many others available for that pleasant destiny. This little flickering flame of principle, this farthing candle of good feeling, was the solitary light that illuminated the gloom of his character.

He had joined the regiment Kellett formerly belonged to at Malta, a few weeks before the other had sold out, and having met accidentally in Ireland, they had renewed the acquaintance, stimulated by that strange sympathy which attracts to each other those whose narrow circumstances would seem, in some shape or other, the effects of a cruelty practised on them by the world. Kellett was rather flattered by the recognition of him who recalled the brighter hours of his life, while he entertained a kind of admiration for the worldly wit and cleverness of one who, in talk at least, was a match for the "shrewdest fellow going." Beecher liked the society of a man who thus looked up to him, and who could listen unweariedly to his innumerable plans for amassing wealth and fortune, all of which only needed some little preliminary aid—some miserable thousand or two to start with, to make them as "rich as Rothschild."

Never was there such a Tantalus view of life as he could picture—stores of gold, mines of unbounded wealth—immense stakes to be won here, *rouge et noir* banks to be broke there—all actually craving to be appropriated, if one only had a little of

that shining metal which, like the water thrown down in a pump, is the needful preliminary to securing a supply of the fluid afterwards.

The imaginative faculty plays a great part in the existence of the reduced gentleman! Kellett actually revelled in the gorgeous visions this friend could conjure up. There was that amount of plausibility in his reasonings that satisfied scruple as to practicability, and made him regard Beecher as the most extraordinary instance of a grand financial genius lost to the world—a great Chancellor of the Exchequer born to devise budgets in obscurity!

Bella took a very different measure of him: she read him with all a woman's nicest appreciation, and knew him thoroughly; she saw, however, how much his society pleased her father, how their Sunday strolls together valled him from the dreary depression the week was sure to leave behind it, and how these harmless visions of imaginary prosperity served to cheer the gloom of actual poverty. She, therefore, concealed so much as she could of her own opinion, and received Beecher as cordially as she was able.

"Ah, Paul, my boy, how goes it? Miss Kellett, how d'ye do?" said Beecher, with that easy air and pleasant smile that well became him. "I thought by starting early I should just catch you at breakfast, while I also took another hour out of my Sunday—the one day the law mercifully bestows on such poor devils as myself—ha, ha, ha!" And he laughed heartily, as though insolvency was as droll a thing as could be.

"You bear up well, anyhow, Beecher," said Kellett, admiringly.

"What's the odds so long as you're happy!" cried the other, gaily. "Never say die. They take it out in fifty per cent., but they can't work the oracle against our good spirits, eh, Kellett? The *mens sana in corpore*—what d'ye call him, my lad?—that's the real thing."

"Indeed, I suppose it is!" said Kellett, not very clear as to what he concurred in.

"There are few fellows, let me tell you, would be as light-hearted as I am, with four writs and a judge's warrant hanging over them—eh, Miss Bella, what do you say to that?" said Beecher.

She smiled half sadly and said nothing.

"Ask John Scott—ask Bicknell Morris, or any of the "Legs" you like—if there's a man of them all ever bore up like me.

'Beecher's a bar of iron,' they'll tell you; 'that fellow can bear any amount of hammering;' and maybe I haven't had it! And all Lackington's fault!"

"That's the worst of all!" said Kellett, who had listened to the same accusation in the self-same words at least a hundred times before.

"Lackington is the greatest fool going! He doesn't see the advantage of pushing his family influence. He might have had me in for 'Mallow.' Grog Davis said to him one day, 'Look now, my Lord, Annesley is the best horse in your stable, if you'd only stand to win on him, he is!' But Lackington would not hear of it. He thinks me a flat! You won't believe it, but he does!"

"Faith! he's wrong there," said Kellett, with all the emphasis of sincerity.

"I rather suspect he is, Master Kellett. I was trained in another school—brought up amongst fellows would skin a cat, by Jove! What I say is, let A. B. have a chance—just let him in once, and see if he won't do the thing!"

"Do you wish to be in Parliament, Mr. Beecher?" asked Bella, with a smile of half repressed drollery.

"Of course I do. First, there's the Protection—no bad thing as times go; then it would be uncommon strange if I couldn't 'tool the coach into the yard' safely. They'd have to give me a devilish good thing. You'd see what a thorn I'd be in their sides. Ask Grog Davis what kind of fellow I am; he'll tell you if I'm easily put down. But Lackington is a fool; he can't see the road before him!"

"You reckon, then, on being a debater!" said she, quietly.

"A little of everything, Miss Bella," said he, laughing; "like the modern painters, not particular for a shade or two. I'd not go wasting my time with that old Tory lot—they're all worked out, aged and weighted, as John Scott would call them—I'd go in with the young 'uns—the Manchester two-year-olds, universal—what d'ye call it?—and vote by ballot. They're the fellows have 'the tin,' by Jove! they have."

"Then I scarcely see how Lord Lackington would advance his family influence by promoting your views," said she again.

"To be sure he would. It would be the safest hedge in the world for him. He'd square his book by it, and stand to win, no matter what horse came in. Besides, why should they buy me, if I wasn't against them? You don't nobble the horse in your own stable—eh, Kellett, old boy?"

"You're a wonderful fellow, Beecher!" said Kellett, in a most honest admiration of his friend.

"If they'd only give me a chance, Paul—just one chance!"

It was not very easy to see what blot in the game of life he purposed to himself to "hit" when he used this expression, "if they only give me a chance;" vague and indistinct as it was, still for many a year had it served him as a beacon of hope. A shadow vision of creditors "done," horses "nobbled," awkward testimonies "squared," a millenary period of bills easily discounted, with an indulgent Angel presiding over the Bankrupt Court,—these and like blessings doubtless all flitted before him as the fruits of that same "chance" which destiny held yet in store for him.

Hope is a generous fairy; she deigns to sit beside the humblest firesides—she will linger even in the damp cell of the prison, or rest her wings on the wave-tossed raft of the ship wrecked, and in such mission is she thrice blessed! But by what strange caprice does she visit the hearts of men like this? Perhaps it is that the very spirit of her ministering is to despair of nothing.

We are by no means sure that our reader will take the same pleasure that Kellett did in Beecher's society, and therefore we shall spare him the narrative of their walk. They strolled along for hours, now, by the shingly shore, on which the waves swept smoothly, now, inland, through leafy lanes and narrow roads, freckled with patchy sunlight. The day was calm and still—one of those solemn autumnal days which lend to scenery a something of sadness in their unvarying quiet. Although so near a great city, the roads were little travelled, and they sauntered for hours scarcely meeting any one.

Wherever the smoke rose above the tall beech-trees, wherever the ornamented porch of some lone cottage peeped through the copse, or the handsome entrance-gate proclaimed the well-to-do owner of some luxurious abode, Kellett would stop to tell who it was lived there—the wealthy merchant, the affluent banker, the alderman or city dignitary, who had amassed his fortune by this or that pursuit. Through all his stories there ran the vein of depreciation, which the once landed proprietor cherished towards the men who were the "first of their name." He was sure to remember some trait of their humble beginnings in life; how this one had come up barefooted to Dublin fifty years before; how that, had held horses in the street for hire. It was strange, but scarcely one escaped some commentary of this kind; not that there was a spark of ill nature in the man, but

that he experienced a species of self-consolation in thinking that in all his narrow fortune he had claims of kindred and connexion which none of them could compete with. Beecher's thoughts took, meanwhile, a different course; whenever not awakened to interest by some trait of their sharpness or cunning, to which he listened with avidity, he revelled in the idea of their wealth, as a thing of which they might be despoiled: "Wouldn't that fellow take shares in some impossible speculation?—Couldn't the other be induced to buy some thousand pounds' worth of valueless scrip?—Would this one kindly permit himself to 'be cleared out' at hazard?—Might that one be persuaded to lose a round sum at *écarté*?"

And thus did they view life, with widely different sympathies, it is true, but yet in a spirit that made them companionable to each other. One "grew his facts," like raw material which the other manufactured into those curious wares by which he amused his fancy. Poverty is a stronger bond than many believe it; when men begin to confess it to each other, they take something very like an oath of fidelity.

"By the way," said Beecher, as he bade his friend good night, "you told me you knew Dunn—Davenport Dunn?"

"To be sure I do; know him well."

"Couldn't you introduce me to him; that's a fellow might be able to assist me? I'm certain he could give me a chance; eh, Kellett?"

"Well; I expect him back in Ireland every day. I was asking after him no later than yesterday; but he's still away."

"When he comes back, however, you can mention me, of course; he'll know who I am."

"I'll do it with pleasure. Good night, Beecher—good night; and I hope"—this was soliloquy as he turned back towards the door—"I hope Dunn will do more for you than he ever has for me! or, faith, it's not worth while to make the acquaintance."

Bella retired to her room early, and Kellett sat moodily alone by his fire. Like a great many other "embarrassed gentlemen," he was dragging on life amidst all the expedients of loans, bonds, and mortgages, when the bill for sale of the encumbered estates became the law of the land. What with the legal difficulties of dispossessing him, what with the changeful fortunes of a good harvest, or money a little more plentiful in the market, he might have gone on to the last in this fashion, and ended his days where he began them, in the old house of his fathers, when suddenly this new and unexpected stroke of legis-

lation cut short all his resources at once, and left him actually a beggar on the world.

The panic created at the first moment by a law that seemed little short of confiscation; the large amount of landed property thus suddenly thrown into the market; the prejudice against Irish investment, so strongly entertained by the moneyed classes in England, all tended vastly to depreciate the value of those estates which came first for sale; and many were sold at prices scarcely exceeding four or five years of their rental. An accidental disturbance in the neighbourhood, some petty outrage in the locality, was enough to depreciate the value; and purchasers actually fancied themselves engaged in speculations so hazardous that nothing short of the most tempting advantages would requite them for their risk.

One of the very first estates for sale was Kellett's Court. The charges on the property were immense, the accumulated debts of three generations of spendthrifts; the first charge, however, was but comparatively small, and yet even this was not covered by the proceeds of the sale. A house that had cost nearly forty thousand pounds, standing on its own demesne, surrounded by an estate yielding upwards of three thousand a year, was knocked down for fifteen thousand four hundred pounds.

Kellett was advised to appeal against this sale on various grounds: he was in possession of an offer of more than double for the same property in times less prosperous; he could show a variety of grounds—surprise and others—to invalidate the ruinous contract; and it was then that he once again, after a whole life, found himself in contact with Davenport Dunn, the attorney for many parties whose interests were compromised in the sale. By no possible accident could the property be sold at such a price as would leave any surplus to himself; but he hoped, indeed he was told, that he would be favourably considered by those whose interest he was defending; and this last throw for fortune was now the subject of his dreary thoughts.

There was, too, another anxiety, and a nearer one, pressing on his heart. Kellett had a son, a fine, frank, open-hearted young fellow, who had grown up to manhood, little dreaming that he would ever be called on to labour for his own support. The idle lounging habits of a country life had indisposed him to all study, so that even his effort to enter college was met by a failure, and he was turned back on the very threshold of the University. Jack Kellett went home, vowing he'd never more

trouble his head about Homer and Lucian, and he kept his word; he took to his gun and his pointers with renewed vigour, waiting until such time as he might obtain his gazette to a regiment on service. His father had succeeded in securing a promise of such an appointment, but, unhappily, the reply only arrived on the very week that Kellett's Court was sold, and an order for the Horse Guards to lodge the purchase-money of his commission came at the very hour when they were irretrievably ruined.

Jack disappeared the next morning, and the day following brought a letter, stating that he had enlisted in the "Rifles," and was off to the Crimea. Old Kellett concealed the sorrow that smote him for the loss of his boy, by affecting indignation at being thus deserted. So artfully did he dress up this self-deception, that Bella was left in doubt as to whether or not some terrible scene had not occurred between the father and son before he left the house. In a tone that she never ventured to dispute, he forbade her to allude to Jack before him, and thus did he treasure up this grief for himself alone and his own lonely hours, cheating his sorrow by the ingenious devices of that constraint he was thus obliged to practise on himself. Like a vast number of men with whom the world has gone hardily, he liked to brood over his misfortunes, and magnify them to himself. In this way he opened a little bank of compassion, that answered every draft he drew on it. Over and over to himself—like a miser revelling over his hoarded wealth—did he count all the hardships of his destiny. He loved thus to hug his misery in solitude, while he whispered to his heart, "You are a courageous fellow, Paul Kellett; there are not many who could carry your cheerful face, or walk with a head as high as you do to-day. The man that owned Kellett's Court, and was one of the first in his county, living in a poor cottage, with sixty pounds a year!—that's the test of what stuff a man's made of. Show me another man in Ireland could do it! Show me one that could meet the world as uncomplainingly, and all the while never cease to be what he was born—a gentleman." This was the philosophy he practised; this the lesson he taught; this the pæan he chanted in his own heart. The various extremities to which he might—being anything other than what he was—have been tempted, the excesses he might have fallen into, the low associates he might have kept, the base habits he might have contracted, all the possible and impossible contingencies that might have befallen him, and all his difficulties

therein, formed a little fiction world that he gloried to lose himself in contemplating.

It is not often that selfishness can take a form so blameless; nor is it always that self-deception can be so harmless. In this indulgence we now leave him.

CHAPTER V.

THE WORLD'S CHANGES.

WHILE Mr. Davenport Dunn's residence was in Merrion-square, his house of business was in Henrietta-street, one of those roomy old mansions which, before the days of the Union, lodged the aristocracy of Ireland, but which have now fallen into utter neglect and decay. Far more spacious in extent, and more ornate in decoration than anything modern Dublin can boast, they remain, in their massive doors of dark mahogany, their richly stuccoed ceilings, and their handsome marble chimney-pieces, the last witnesses of a period when Dublin was a real metropolis.

From the spacious dinner-room below to the attics above, all this vast edifice was now converted into offices, and members of Mr. Dunn's staff were located even in the building at the rear, where the stables once had stood. Nothing can so briefly convey the varied occupations of his life, as a glance at some of the inscriptions which figured on the different doors: "Inland Navigation Office," "Grand Munster Junction Drainage," "Compressed Fuel Company," "Reclaimed Lands," "Encumbered Estates," "Coast Fishery," "Copper and Cobalt Mining Association," "Refuge Harbour Company," "Slate and Marble Quarries," "Tyrawley and Erris Bank of Deposit," "Silver and Lead Mines." These were but a few of the innumerable "associations," "companies," and "industrial speculations" which denoted the cares and employments of that busy head. Indeed, the altered fortunes of that great mansion itself presented no bad type of the changed destinies of the land. Here, once, was the abode of only too splendid hospitality, of all that refined courtesy and polished manners could contribute to make society as fascinating as it was brilliant. Here were wit and beauty, and a high, chivalrous tone of manners, blended, it is true, with

wildest extravagance and a general levity of thought, that imparted to intercourse the glowing tints of an orgie, and in their stead were now the active signs of industry, all the means by which wealth is amassed and great fortunes acquired; every resource of the country explored, every natural advantage consulted and developed—the mountains, the valleys, the rivers, the sea-coasts, the vast tracts of bog and moss, the various mines and quarries, the products once deemed valueless, the districts formerly abandoned as irreclaimable, all brought out into strong light, and all investigated in a spirit which hitherto had been unknown to Ireland. What a change was here, and what necessities must have been the fate of those who had so altered all their habits and modes of thought as to conform to a system so widely different from all they had hitherto followed. It was like re-colonising an empire, so subversive were all the innovations of what had preceded them.

“Eh, Barton, we used to trip up these stairs more flippantly once on a time,” said a very handsome old man, whose well-powdered hair and queue were rather novelties in modern appearance, to a feeble figure who, assisted by his servant, was slowly toiling his way upwards.

“How d’ye do, Glengariff,” said the other, with a weak smile. “So we used; and they were better days in every sense of the word.”

“Not a doubt of it,” said the other. “Is that your destination?” And he pointed to a door inscribed with the title “Encumbered Estates.”

“Ay!” said Barton, sighing.

“It’s mine, too, I’m sorry to say,” cried Lord Glengariff; “as I suppose ere long it will be that of every country gentleman in the land!”

“We might have known it must come to this!” muttered the other, in a weak voice.

“I don’t think so,” broke in his Lordship, quickly. “I see no occasion at all for what amounts to an act of confiscation; why not give us time to settle with our creditors? Why not leave us to deal with our encumbrances in our own way? The whole thing is a regular political swindle, Barton; they wanted a new gentry that could be more easily managed than the old fellows, who had no station, no rank, but right ready to buy both one and the other by supporting——”

“Can I be of any service to your Lordship?” interrupted a very over-dressed and much-gold-chained man, of about forty,

with a great development of chest, set off to advantage by a very pretentious waistcoat.

"Ah, Hanks! is Dunn come back yet?" asked Lord Glengariff.

"No, my Lord; we expect him on Saturday. The telegraph is dated St. Cloud, where he is stopping with the Emperor."

Glengariff gave Barton a slight pinch in the arm, and a look of intense meaning at the words.

"Nothing has been done in that matter of mine?" said Barton, feebly. "Jonas Barton is the name," added he, colouring at the necessity of announcing himself.

"Jonas Barton, of Curryglass House?"

"Yes, that's it."

"Sold yesterday under the Court, sir—for, let me see——" And he opened a small memorandum-book. "Griffith's valuation," muttered he between his teeth, "was rather better than the Commissioner's—yes, sir, they got a bargain of that property yesterday; it went for twenty-two thousand six hundred——"

"Great God, sir! the whole estate?"

"The whole estate; there is a tithe-rent charge——"

"There, there, don't you see he does not hear you," said Lord Glengariff, angrily. "Have you no room where he can sit down for half an hour or so." And so saying, he assisted the servant to carry the now lifeless form into a small chamber beside them. The sick man rallied soon, and as quickly remembered where he was.

"This is bad news, Glengariff," said he, with a sickly effort at a smile. "Have you heard who was the buyer?"

"No, no; what does it matter. Take my arm and get out of this place. Where are you stopping in town? Can I set you down?" said the other, in hurry and confusion.

"I'm with my son-in-law at Ely-place; he is to call for me here, so you can leave me, my dear friend, for I see you are impatient to get away."

Lord Glengariff pressed his hand cordially, and descended the stairs far more rapidly than he had mounted them.

"Lord Glengariff—one word, my Lord," cried Mr. Hanks hastening after him, and just catching him at the door.

"Not now, sir—not now," said Lord Glengariff.

"I beg a thousand pardons, my Lord, but Mr. Dunn writes me peremptorily to say that it cannot be effected——"

"Not raise the money, did you say?" asked he, growing suddenly pale.

"Not in the manner he proposed, my Lord. If you will allow me to explain——"

"Come over to my hotel. I am at Bilton's!" said Lord Glengariff. "Call on me there in an hour!" And so saying, he got into his carriage and drove off.

In the large drawing-room of the hotel sat a lady working, and occasionally reading a book which lay open before her. She was tall and thin, finely featured, and though now entered upon that period of life when every line and every tint confess the ravage of time, was still handsome. This was Lady Augusta Arden, Lord Glengariff's only unmarried daughter, the very type of her father in temperament as well as appearance.

"By George! it is confiscation. It is the inauguration of that Communism the French speak of," cried Lord Glengariff, as he entered the room. "There's poor Barton, of Curryglass, one of the oldest names in his county, sold out, and for nothing—absolutely nothing. No man shall persuade me that this is just or equitable; no man shall tell me that the Legislature shall step in and decide at any moment how I am to deal with my creditors."

"I never heard of that Burton."

"I said Barton—not Burton; a man whose estate used to be called five thousand a year," said he, angrily. "There he is now, turned out on the world. I verily believe he hasn't a guinea left! And what is all this for? To raise up in the country a set of spurious gentry—fellows that were never heard of, whose names are only known over shopboards—as if the people should be better treated or more kindly dealt with by them than by us, their natural protectors! By George! if Ireland should swarm with Davenport Dunns, I'd call it a sorry exchange for the good blood she had lost in exterminating her old gentry."

"Has he come back?" asked Lady Augusta, as she bent her head more deeply over her work, and her cheeks grew a shade more red.

"No. He's dining with royalties, and driving about in princely carriages on the Continent. Seeing what the pleasures of his intimacy have cost us here at home, I'd say that these great personages ought to look sharp, or, by George! he'll sell them out, as he has done us." He laughed a bitter laugh at his jest, but his daughter did not join in the emotion.

"I scarcely think it fair," said she, at length, "to connect Mr. Dunn with a legislation which he is only called upon to execute."

"With all my heart. Acquit him as much as you will, but, for my part, I feel very little tenderness for the hand that accomplishes the last functions of the law against me. These fellows have displayed a zeal and an alacrity in their work that shows how they relish the sport. After all," said he, after a pause, "this Dunn is neither better nor worse than the rest of them, and in one respect he has the advantage over them—he has not forgotten himself quite so much as the others. To be sure, we knew him in his very humblest fortunes, Augusta; he was meek enough then."

She stooped to pick up her work, which had fallen, and her neck and face were crimson as she resumed it.

"Wonderful little anticipation had he then of the man he was to become one of these days. Do you know, Augusta, that they say he is actually worth two millions?—two millions!"

She never spoke; and after an interval Lord Glengariff burst out into a strange laugh.

"You'd scarcely guess what I was laughing at, Augusta. I was just remembering the wretched hole he used to sleep in. It was a downright shame to put him there over the stable, but the cottage was under repair at the time, and there was no help for it, 'I can accommodate myself anywhere, my Lord,' he said. Egad, he has contrived to fulfil the prediction in a very different sense. Just fancy—two millions sterling!"

It was precisely what Lady Augusta was doing at the moment, though, perhaps, not quite in the spirit his Lordship suspected.

"Suppose even one half of it be true, with a million of money at command, what can't a man have now-a-days?"

And so they both fell a-thinking of all that same great amount of riches could buy—what of power, respect, rank, flattery, political influence, fine acquaintance, fine diamonds, and fine dinners.

"If he play his cards well, he might be a Peer," thought my Lord.

"If he be as ambitious as he ought to be, he might aspire to a Peer's daughter," was the lady's reflection.

"He has failed in my negotiation, however," said Lord Glengariff, peevishly; "at least, Hanks just told me that it can't be done. I detest that fellow Hanks. It shows great want of tact in Dunn having such a man in his employment—a vulgar, self-sufficient, over-dressed fellow, who can't help being familiar out of his own self-satisfaction. Now Dunn himself knows his place. Don't you think so?"

She muttered something not very intelligible, but which sounded like concurrence.

"Yes," he resumed, "Dunn does not forget himself—at least with *me*." And to judge from the carriage of his head as he spoke, and the air with which he carried the pinch of snuff to his nose, he had not yet despaired of seeing the world come back to the traditions which once had made it worth living in.

"I am willing to give him every credit for his propriety of conduct, Augusta," added he, in a still more lofty tone; "for we live in times when really wealth and worldly prosperity have more than their rightful supremacy, and such men as Dunn are made the marks of an adulation that is actually an outrage—an outrage upon *us*!"

And the last little monosyllable was uttered with an emphasis of intense significance.

Just as his Lordship had rounded his peroration, the servant presented him with a small three-cornered note. He opened it, and read:

"MY LORD,—I think the bearer of this, T. Driscoll, might possibly do what you wish for; and I send him, since I am sure that a personal interview with your Lordship would be more efficacious than any negotiation

"By your Lordship's most obedient to command,

"SIMPSON HANKES."

"Is the person who brought this below?" asked Lord Glengariff.

"Yes, my Lord; he is waiting for the answer."

"Show him into my dressing-room."

Mr. Terence Driscoll was accordingly introduced into that sanctum; and while he employs his few spare moments in curious and critical examination of the various gold and silver objects which contribute to his Lordship's toilet, and wonderingly snuffs at essences and odours of whose existence he had never dreamed, let us take the opportunity of a little examination of himself. He was a short, fat old man, with a very round red face, whose jovial expression was rather heightened than marred by a tremendous squint; for the eyes kept in incessant play and movement, which intimated a restless drollery that his full, capacious mouth well responded to. In dress and general appearance, he belonged to the class of the comfortable farmer,

and his massive silver watch-chain and huge seal displayed a consciousness of his well-to-do condition in life.

"Are you Mr. Driscoll?" said Lord Glengariff, as he looked at the letter to prompt him to the name. "Pray, take a seat!"

"Yes, my Lord, I'm that poor creature Terry Driscoll; the neighbours call me 'Tearin' Terry, but that's all past and gone, Heaven be praised! It was a fever I had, my Lord, and my rayson wandered, and I did many a thing that desthroyed me entirely; I tore up the lease of my house, I tore up Peter Driscoll's, my uncle's, will; ay, and worse than all, I tore up all my front teeth!"

And, in evidence of this feat of dentistry, Mr. Driscoll gave a grin that exposed his bare gums to view.

"Good Heavens, how shocking!" exclaimed Lord Glengariff, though not impossibly the expression was extorted by the sight rather than the history of the calamity.

"Shockin' indeed, my Lord—that's the name for it!" said Terry, sighing; "but ye see I wasn't compos when I did it. I thought they were a set of blackguards that I couldn't root out of the land—squatters that wouldn't pay sixpence, nor do a day's work. That was the delusion that was upon me!"

"I hold here a letter from Mr. Hanks," said his Lordship, pompously, and in a tone that was meant to recal Mr. Driscoll from the personal narrative he had entered upon with such evident self-satisfaction. "He mentions you as one likely—that is to say—one in a position—a person, in fact——"

"Yes, my Lord, yes," interrupted Terry, with a grin of unbounded acquiescence.

"And adds," continued his Lordship, "your desire to communicate personally with myself." The words were very few and not very remarkable, and yet Lord Glengariff contrived to throw into them an amount of significance really great. They seemed to say, "Bethink thee well, Terry Driscoll, of the good fortune that this day has befallen thee. Thy boldness has been crowned with success, and there thou sittest now, being the poor worm that thou art, in converse with one who wears a coronet."

And so, indeed, in all abject humility, did Mr. Driscoll appear to feel the situation. He drew his feet closer together, and stole his hands up the wide sleeves of his coat, as though endeavouring to diminish, as far as might be, his corporeal presence.

His Lordship saw that enough had been done for subjection, and blandly added, "And I could have no objection to the interview; none whatever."

"It's too good you are, my Lord, too good and too gracious to the like of me," said Terry, barely raising his eyes to throw a glance of mingled shame and drollery on his Lordship; "but I come by rayson of what Mr. Hanks tould me, that it was a trifle of a loan—a small matter of money your Lordship was wantin', just at this moment."

"I prefer doing these kind of things through my solicitors. I know nothing of business, Sir—absolutely nothing," said his Lordship, haughtily. "The present case, however, might form an exception. The sum I require is, as you justly remark, a mere trifle, and the occasion is not worthy of legal interference."

"Yes, my Lord," chimed in Driscoll, who had a most provoking habit of employing the affirmative in all situations.

"I suppose he mentioned to you the amount?" asked his Lordship, quickly.

"No, indeed, my Lord; all he said was, 'Terry,' says he, 'go over to Bilton's Hotel with this note, and ask for Lord Glengariff. He wants a little ready cash,' says he, 'and I tould him you're a likely man to get it for him. It's too small a matter for us here,' says he, 'to be bothered about.'"

"He hadn't the insolence to make use of these words towards me!" said Lord Glengariff, growing almost purple with passion.

"Faix, I'm afeard he had, my Lord," said Terry, looking down; "but I'm sure he never meant any harm in it; 'twas only as much as to say, 'There, Terry, there's something for you; you're a poor strugglin' man, and are well plazed to turn a penny in a small way. If you can accommodate my Lord there,' says he, 'he'll not forget it to you.'"

The conclusion of this speech was far more satisfactory to his Lordship than its commencement seemed to promise; and Lord Glengariff smiled half graciously as he said, "I'm not in the habit of neglecting those who serve me."

"Yes, my Lord," said Driscoll again.

"I may safely say, that any influence I possess has always been exercised in favour of those who have been, so to say, supporters of my family."

Had his Lordship uttered a sentiment of the most exalted and self-denying import, he could not have assumed a prouder air than when he had finished these words. "And now, Mr. Driscoll, to business. I want five thousand pounds——"

A long, low whistle from Terry, as he threw up both his hands in the air, abruptly stopped his Lordship.

"What do you mean; does the sum appear so tremendous, Sir?"

"Five thousand! Where would I get it? Five thousand pounds? By the mortal man! your Lordship might as well ax me for five millions. I thought it was a hundred; or, maybe, a hundred and fifty; or, at the outside, two hundred pounds, just to take you over to London for what they call the sayson, or to cut a figure at Paris; but, five thousand! By my conscience, that's the price of an estate now-a-days!"

"It is upon estated property I intend to raise this loan, Sir," said his Lordship, angrily.

"Not Cushnacreena, my Lord?" asked Terry, eagerly.

"No, Sir; that is secured by settlement."

"Nor Ballyrennin?"

"No; the townland of Ballyrennin is, in a manner, tied up."

"Tory's Mill, maybe?" inquired Terry, with more eagerness.

"Well, Sir," said his Lordship, drawing himself up, "I must really make you my compliments upon the very accurate knowledge you appear to possess about my estate. Since what period, may I venture to ask, have you conceived this warm interest in my behalf?"

"The way of it was this, my Lord," said Driscoll, drawing his chair closer, and dropping his voice to a low, confidential tone. "After I had the fever—the fever and ague I told you about—I got up out of bed the poor crature you see me, not able to think of anything, or do a hand's turn for myself, but just a burden on my friends or anybody that would keep me. Well, I tried all manner of ways to make myself useful, and I used to go errands here and there over the country for any one that wanted to know what land was to be sold, where there was a lot of good sheep, who had a drove of bullocks or a fancy bull; and, just getting into the habit of it, I larned a trifle of what was doing in the three counties, so that the people call me 'Terry's Almanack'—that's the name they gave me, better than Tearin' Terry, anyhow! At all events, I got a taste for finding out the secrets of all the great families; and to be sure, if I only had the memory, I'd know a great deal, but my head is like a cullender, and everything runs out as fast as you put it in. That's how it is, my Lord, and no lie in it." And Terry wiped his forehead and heaved a heavy sigh, like a man who had just accomplished a very arduous task.

"So, then, I begin to understand how Hanks sent you over here to me," said his Lordship.

"Yea, my Lord," muttered Terry with a bow.

"I had been under the impression—the erroneous impression—that you were yourself prepared to advance this small sum."

"Me! Terry Driscoll lend five thousand pounds! Arrah, look at me, my Lord—just take a glance at me, and you'll see how likely it is I'd have as many shillings! 'Twas only by rayson of being always about—on the tramp, as they call it—that Mr. Hanks thought I could be of use to your Lordship. 'Go over,' says he, 'and just tell him who and what you are.' There it is now!"

Lord Glengariff made no reply, but slowly walked the room in deep meditation; a passing feeling of pity for the poor fellow before him had overcome any irritation his own disappointment had occasioned, and for the moment the bent of his mind was compassionate.

"Well, Driscoll," said he, at length, "I don't exactly see how you can serve me in this matter."

"Yes, my Lord," said Terry, with a pleasant leer of his restless eyes.

"I say I don't perceive that you can contribute in any way to the object I have in view," said his Lordship, half peevish at being, as he thought, misapprehended. "Hanks ought to have known as much himself."

"Yes, my Lord," chimed in Terry.

"And you may tell him so from *me*. He is totally unfitted for his situation, and I am only surprised that Dunn, shrewd fellow that he is, should have ever placed a man of this stamp in a position of such trust. The first requisite in such a man is to understand the deference he owes to *us*."

There was an emphasis on the last monosyllable that pretty clearly announced how little share Terry Driscoll enjoyed in this copartnery.

"That because I have a momentary occasion for a small sum of ready money, he should send over to confer with me a half-witted—I mean a man only half recovered from a fever—a poor fellow still suffering from——"

"Yes, my Lord," interposed Terry, as he laid his hand on his forehead in token of the seat of his calamity.

"It is too gross—it is outrageous—but Dunn shall hear of it—Dunn shall deal with this fellow when he comes back. I'm sorry for *you*, Driscoll—very sorry indeed; it is a sad bereavement, and though you are not exactly a case for an asylum—perhaps, indeed, you might have objections to an asylum——"

"Yes, my Lord."

"Well, in that case, private friends are, I opine--private friends—and the kind sympathies of those who have known you—eh, don't you think so?"

"Yes, my Lord."

"That is the sensible view to take of it. I am glad you see it in this way. It shows that you really exercise a correct judgment—a very wise discretion in your case—and for a man in *your* situation—your *painful* situation—you see things in their true light."

"Yes, my Lord." And this time the eyes rolled with a most peculiar expression.

"If you should relapse, however—if, say, former symptoms were to threaten again—remember that I am on the committee, or a governor, or something or other of one of these institutions, and I might be of use to you. Remember that, Driscoll." And with a wave of his hand his Lordship dismissed Terry, who, after a series of respectful obeisances, gained the door and disappeared.

CHAPTER VI.

SYBELLA KELLETT.

WHEN change of fortune had reduced the Kelledds so low that Sybella was driven to become a daily governess, her hard fate had exacted from her about the very heaviest of all sacrifices. It was not, indeed, the life of unceasing toil—dreary and monotonous as such toil is,—it was not the humility of a station for which the world affords not one solitary protection,—these were not what she dreaded: as little was it the jarring sense of dependence daily and hourly imposed. No, she had courage and a high determination to confront each and all of these. The great source of her suffering was in the loss of that calm and unbroken quiet to which the retired habits of a remote country-house had so long accustomed her. With scarcely anything which could be called a society near them, so reduced in means as to be unable to receive visitors at home, Kellett's Court had been for many years a lonely house. The days succeeded each other with such similarity that time was unfelt, seasons came and went, and years rolled on unconsciously. No sights nor sounds of the great world without invaded these retired precincts. Of the mighty events which convulsed the politics of states—of the great issues that engaged men's minds throughout Europe—they heard absolutely nothing. The passing story of some little incident of cottier life represented to them all that they had of news; and thus time glided noiselessly along, till they came to feel a sense of happiness in that same unbroken round of life.

They who have experienced the measured tread of a conventual existence—where the same incidents daily recur at the same periods—where no events from without obtrude—where the passions and the ambitions and cares of mankind have so little of reality to the mind that they fail to impress with any

meaning—are well aware that in the peaceful calm of spirit thus acquired there is a sense of happiness, which is not the less real that it wears the semblance of seriousness, almost of sadness.

In all that pertained to a sombre monotony, Kellett's Court was a convent. The tall mountains to the back, the deep woods to the front, seemed barriers against the world without; and there was a silence and a stillness about the spot as though it were some lone island in a vast sea, where no voyagers ever touched, no traveller ever landed. This same isolation, strong in its own sense of security, was the charm of the place, investing it with a kind of romance, and imparting to Sybella's own life a something of storied interest. The very few books the house contained she had read and re-read till she knew them almost by heart. They were lives of voyagers—hardy men of enterprise and daring, who had pushed their fortunes in far-away lands—or else sketches of life and adventure in distant countries.

The annals of these sea-rovers were full of all the fascination of which gorgeous scenery and stirring incident form the charm. There were lands such as no painter's genius ever fancied, verdure and flowers of more than fairy brilliancy, gold and gems of splendour that rivalled Aladdin's cave, strange customs, and curious observances mingled with deeds of wildest daring, making up a succession of pictures wherein the mind alternated between the voluptuous repose of tropical enjoyment and the hair-breadth 'scapes of buccaneering existence. The great men whose genius planned, and whose courage achieved, these enterprises, formed for her a sort of hero worship. Their rough virtues—their splendid hospitality—their lion-hearted defiance of danger—were strong appeals to her sympathy, while in their devoted loyalty she found a species of chivalry that elevated them in her esteem. Woman-like, too, she inclined to make success the true test of greatness, and glorified to herself those bold spirits who never halted nor turned aside when on their road to victory. The splendid self-dependence of such men as Drake and Dampier struck her as the noblest attribute of mankind; that resolute trust in their own stout hearts imparted to them a degree of interest almost devotional; and over and over did she bethink her what a glorious destiny it would have been to have had a life associated and bound up with some such man as one of these. The very contest and controversy his actions would have evoked, heightened the illusion, and there savoured

of heroism in sharing a fame that flung down its proud defiance to the world.

Estrangement from the world often imparts to the stories of the past, or even to the characters of fiction, a degree of interest which, by those engaged in the actual work of life, is only accorded to their friends or relatives; and thus, to this young girl in her isolation, such names as Raleigh and Cavendish—such characters as Cromwell, Lorenzo de Medici, and Napoleon—stood forth before her in all the attributes of well-known individuals. To have so far soared above the ordinary accidents of life as to live in an atmosphere above all other men—to have seen the world and its ways from an eminence that gave wider scope to vision and more play to speculation—to have meditated over the destinies of mankind from the height of a station that gave control over their actions—seemed so glorious a privilege, that the blemishes and even the crimes of men so gifted were merged in the greatness of the mighty task they had imposed upon themselves; and thus was it that she claimed for these an exemption from the judgments that had visited less distinguished wrong-doers most heavily. “How can I, or such as I am, pronounce upon one like this man?—what knowledge have I of the conflict waged within his deep intelligence?—how can I fathom the ocean of his thoughts, or even guess at the difficulties that have opposed, the doubts that have beset him? I can but vaguely fashion to myself the end and object of his journey; how then shall I criticise the road by which he travels, the halts he makes, the devious turnings and windings he seems to fall into?” In such plausibilities she merged every scruple as to those she had deified to her own mind. “Their ways are not our ways,” said she; “their natures are as little our natures.”

From all the dream-land of these speculations was she suddenly and rudely brought to face the battle of life itself, an humble soldier in the ranks. No longer to dwell in secret converse with the mighty spirits who had swayed their fellow-men, she was now to enter upon that path of daily drudgery whose direst infliction was the contact with that work-o'-day world wherewith she had few sympathies.

Mrs. Hawkshaw had read her advertisement in a morning paper, and sent for her to call upon her. Now Mrs. Hawkshaw was an alderman's lady, who lived in a fine house, and had fine clothes, and fine servants, and fine plate, and everything, in short, fine about her but a fine husband, for he was a rough, homespun, good-natured sort of man, who cared little for any-

thing save a stocking-factory he owned at Balbriggan, and the stormy incidents that usually shook the "livery" he belonged to.

There were six little Hawkshaws to be governed, and geographied, and catechised, and civilised in all the various forms by which untaught humanity is prepared for the future work of life; there were rudiments of variously-coloured knowledge to be imparted, habits instilled, and tempers controlled, by one who, though she brought to her task the most sincere desire to succeed, was yet deep in a world of her own thoughts,—far lost in the mazy intricacies of her own fancies. That poor Miss Kellett, therefore, should pass for a very simple-minded, good creature, quite unfit for her occupation, was natural enough; and that Mrs. Hawkshaw should "take her into training" was almost an equally natural consequence.

"She seems to be always like one in a dream, my dear," said Mrs. Hawkshaw to her husband. "The children do exactly as they please; they play all false, and she never corrects them; they draw landscapes in their copy-books, and she says, 'Very nicely done, darlings.'"

"Her misfortunes are preying upon her, perhaps."

"Misfortunes! why, they have been in poverty this many a year. My brother Terry tells me that the Kelletts hadn't above two hundred a year, and that latterly they lost even this."

"Well, it is a come-down in the world, anyhow," said Hawkshaw, sighing, "and I must say she bears it well."

"If she only feels it as little as she appears to do everything else, the sacrifice doesn't cost her much," said the lady, tartly. "I told her she was to come here last Sunday and take charge of the children; she never came; and when I questioned her as to the reason, she only smiled and said, 'She never thought of it; in fact, she was too happy to be alone on that day to think of anything.' And here she comes now, nearly an hour late." And, as she spoke, a weary step ascended the steps to the door, and an uncertain, faltering hand raised the knocker.

"It is nigh eleven o'clock, Miss Kellett," said Mrs. Hawkshaw, as she met her on the stairs.

"Indeed—I am so sorry—I must have forgotten—I don't think I knew the hour," said the other, stammeringly.

"Your hour is ten, Miss Kellett."

"I think so."

"How is your father, Miss Kellett," asked the Alderman, abruptly, and not sorry to interpose at the juncture.

"He is well, Sir, and seems very happy," said she, gratefully, while her eyes lighted up with pleasure.

"Give him my regards," said Hawkshaw, good-naturedly, and passed down the stairs; while his wife coldly added.

"The children are waiting for you," and disappeared.

With what determined energy did she address herself now to her task—how resolutely devote her whole mind to her duty. She read, and heard, and corrected, and amended with all the intense anxiety of one eager to discharge her trust honestly and well. She did her very utmost to bring her faculties to bear upon every detail of her task, and it was only when one of the girls asked who was he whose name she had been writing over and over again in her copy-book, that she forgot her self-imposed restraint, and in a fervour of delight at the question, replied, "I'll tell you, Mary, who Savonarola was."

In all the vigour of true narrative power, the especial gift of those minds where the play of fancy is only the adornment of the reasoning faculty, she gave a rapid sketch of the prophet priest, his zeal, his courage, and his martyrdom; with that captivating fascination which is the first-born of true enthusiasm, she awakened their interest so deeply, that they listened to all she said as to a romance, whose hero had won their sympathies, and even dimly followed her, as she told them that such men as this stood out from time to time in the world's history like great beacons blazing on a rocky eminence, to guide and warn their fellow men. That, in their own age, characters of this stamp were either undervalued or actually depreciated and condemned, was but the common lot of humanity; their own great destinies raised them very often above the sympathies of ordinary life, and men caught eagerly at the blemishes of those so vastly greater than themselves—hence all the disesteem they met with from contemporaries.

"And are there none like this now, Miss Bella?" asked one of the girls; "or is it that in our country such are not to be met with?"

"They are of every land, and of every age, ay, and of every station! Country, time, birth, have no prerogative. At one moment the great light of the earth has been the noblest born in his nation, at another, a peasant—miles apart in all the accidents of fortune, brothers by the stamp which makes genius a tie of family. To-morrow you shall hear of one, the noblest-hearted man in all England, and yet whose daily toil was the vulgar life of an exciseman. This great man's nature is known

to us, teaching men a higher lesson than all that his genius has bequeathed us."

In the willingness with which they listened to her, Bella found fresh support for her enthusiasm. If, therefore, there was this solace to the irksome nature of her task, it rendered that task itself more and more wearisome and distasteful. Her round of duty led her amongst many who did not care for these things; some heard them with apathy, others with even mockery. How often does it happen in life that feelings, which if freely expanded had spread themselves broadly over the objects of the world, become by repression compressed into principles!

This was the case with her; the more opposition thwarted, the more resolutely was she bent on carrying out her notions. All her reading tended to this direction, all her speculation, all her thought.

"There must be men amongst us even now," said she, "to whom this great prerogative of guidance is given; superior minds who feel the greatness of their mission, and perhaps know how necessary it is to veil their very ascendancy, that they may exercise it more safely and more widely. What concession may they not be making to vulgar prejudice? what submission to this or that ordinance of society? how many a devious path must they tread to reach that goal that the world will not let them strive for more directly? and, worse than all, through what a sea of misrepresentation, and even calumny, must they wade? how must they endure the odious imputations of selfishness, of pride, of hard-heartedness, nay, perhaps, of even crime?—and all this, without the recognition of as much as one who knows their purpose and acknowledges their desert.

CHAPTER VII.

AN ARRIVAL AT MIDNIGHT.

NIGHT had just closed in over the Lake of Como, and, if the character of the scene in daylight had been such as to suggest ideas of dramatic effect, still more was this the case as darkness wrapped the whole landscape, leaving the great Alps barely traceable against the starry sky, while faintly glimmering lights dotted the dark shores from villa and palace, and soft sounds of music floated lazily on the night air, only broken by the plashing stroke of some gondolier as he stole across the lake.

The Villa d'Este was a-glitter with light. The great saloon which opened on the water blazed with lamps; the terraces were illuminated with many-coloured lanterns; solitary candles glimmered from the windows of many a lonely chamber; and even through the dark copses and leafy parterres some lamp twinkled, to show the path to those who preferred the scented night air to the crowded and brilliant assemblage within doors. The votaries of hydropathy are rarely victims of grave malady. They are generally either the exhausted sons and daughters of fashionable dissipation, the worn-out denizens of great cities, or the tired slaves of exciting professions—the men of Politics, of Literature, or of Law. To such as these, a life of easy indolence, the absence of all constraint, the freedom which comes of mixing with a society where not one face is known to them, are the chief charms, and, with that, the privilege of condescending to amusements and intimacies of which, in their more regular course of life, they had not even stooped to partake. To English people this latter element was no inconsiderable feature of pleasure. Strictly defined as all the ranks of society are in their own country—marshalled in classes so rigidly that none may move out of the place to which birth has assigned him—

they feel a certain expansion in this novel liberty, perhaps the one sole new sensation of which their natures are susceptible. It was in the enjoyment of this freedom that a considerable party were now assembled in the great saloons of the villa. There were Russians and Austrians of high rank, conspicuous for their quiet and stately courtesy; a noisy Frenchman or two; a few pale, thoughtful-looking Italians, men whose noble foreheads seem to promise so much, but whose actual lives appear to evidence so little; a crowd of Americans, as distinctive and as marked as though theirs had been a nationality stamped with centuries of transmission; and, lastly, there were the English, already presented to our reader in an early chapter—Lady Lackington and her friend Lady Grace—having, in a caprice of a moment descended to see “what the whole thing was like.”

“No presentations, my Lord, none whatever,” said Lady Lackington, as she arranged the folds of her dress, on assuming a very distinguished position in the room. “We have only come for a few minutes, and don’t mean to make acquaintances.”

“Who is the little pale woman, with the turquoise ornaments?” asked Lady Grace.

“The Princess Labanoff,” said his Lordship, blandly bowing.

“Not she who was suspected of having poisoned——”

“The same.”

“I should like to know her. And the man—who is that tall, dark man, with the high forehead?”

“Glumthal, the great Frankfort millionaire.”

“Oh, present him, by all means. Let us have him here,” said Lady Lackington, eagerly. “What does that little man mean by smirking in that fashion—who is he?” asked she, as Mr. O’Reilly passed and repassed before her, making some horrible grimaces, that he intended to have represented as fascinations.

“On no account, my Lord,” said Lady Lackington, as though replying to a look of entreaty from his Lordship.

“But you’d really be amused,” said he, smiling. “It is about the best bit of low comedy——”

“I detest low comedy.”

“The father of your fair friends, is it not?” asked Lady Grace, languidly.

“Yes. Twining admires them vastly,” said his Lordship, half maliciously. “If I might venture——”

“Oh dear no; not to *me*,” said Lady Grace, shuddering. “I have little tolerance for what are called characters. You may present your Hebrew friend, if you like.”

"He's going to dance with the Princess; and there goes Twining, with one of my beauties, I declare," said Lord Lackington. "I say, Spicer, what is that dark lot, near the door?"

"American trotters, my Lord; just come over."

"You know them, don't you?"

"I met them yesterday at dinner, and shall be delighted to introduce your Lordship. Indeed, they asked me if you were not the Lord that was so intimate with the Prince of Wales."

"How stupid! They might have known, even without the aid of a Peerage, that I was a schoolboy when the Prince was a grown man. The tall girl is good-looking—what's her name?"

"She's the daughter of the Honourable Leonidas Shinbone, that's all I know—rather a belle at Saratoga, I fancy."

"Very dreadful!" sighed Lady Grace, fanning herself; "they do make such a mess of what might be very pretty toilette. You couldn't tell her perhaps, that her front hair is dressed for the back of the head."

"No, Sir; I never play at cards," said Lord Lackington, stiffly, as an American gentleman offered him a pack to draw from.

"Only a little bluff or a small party of poker," said the stranger, "for quarter dollars, or milder if you like it."

A cold bow of refusal was the reply.

"I told you he was the Lord," said a friend in a drawling accent. "He looks as if he'd 'mow us all down like grass.'"

Doctor Lanfranchi, the director of the establishment here interposed, and, by a few words, induced the Americans to retire and leave the others unmolested.

"Thank you, Doctor," said Lady Lackington, in acknowledgment; "your tact is always considerate—always prompt."

"These things never happen in the season, my Lady," said he with a very slight foreign accentuation of the words. "It is only at times like this that people—very excellent and amiable people, doubtless——"

"Oh, to be sure they are," interrupted she, impatiently; "but let us speak of something else. Is that your clairvoyante Princess yonder?"

"Yes, my Lady; she has just revealed to us what was doing at the Crimea. She says that two of the English advanced batteries have slackened their fire for want of ammunition, and that a deserter was telling Todleben of the reason at the moment. She is *en rapport* with her sister, who is now at Sebastopol."

"And are we to be supposed to credit this?" asked my Lord.

"I can only aver that I believe it, my Lord," said Lanfranchi, whose massive head and intensely acute features denoted very little intellectual weakness.

"I wish you'd ask her why are we lingering so long in this dreary place?" sighed Lady Lackington, peevishly.

"She answered that question yesterday, my Lady," replied he, quietly.

"How was that? Who asked her? What did she say?"

"It was the Baron von Glumthal asked: and her answer was, 'Expecting a disappointment.'"

"Very gratifying intelligence, I must say. Did you hear that, my Lord?"

"Yes, I heard it, and I have placed it in my mind in the same category as her Crimean news."

"Can she inform us when we are to get away?" asked her Ladyship.

"She mentioned to-morrow evening as the time, my Lady," said the Doctor, calmly.

A faint laugh of derisive meaning was Lady Lackington's only reply; and the Doctor gravely remarked, "There is more in these things than we like to credit; perhaps our very sense of inferiority in presence of such prediction is a bar to our belief. We do not willingly lend ourselves to a theory which at once excludes us from the elect of prophecy."

"Could she tell us who'll win the Derby?" said Spicer, joining the colloquy. But a glance from her Ladyship at once recalled him from the indiscreet familiarity.

"Do you think she could pronounce whose is the arrival that makes such a clatter outside?" said Lord Lackington, as a tremendous chorus of whip-cracking announced the advent of something very important; and the Doctor hurried off to receive the visitor. Already a large travelling carriage, drawn by eight horses, and followed by a "fourgon" with four, had drawn up before the great entrance, and a courier, gold-banded and whiskered, and carrying a most imposingly swollen money-bag, was ringing stoutly for admittance. When Doctor Lanfranchi had exchanged a few words with the courier, he approached the window of the carriage, and bowing courteously, proceeded to welcome the traveller.

"Your apartments have been ready since the sixteenth, Sir; and we hoped each day to have seen you arrive."

"Have your visitors all gone?" asked the stranger, in a low quiet tone.

"No, Sir; the fine weather has induced many to prolong their stay. We have the Princess Labanoff, Lord Lackington, the Countess Grembinski, the Duke of Terra di Monte, the Lady Grace——"

The traveller, however, paid little attention to the catalogue, but with the aid of the courier on one side and his valet on the other, slowly descended from the carriage. If he availed himself of their assistance, there was little in his appearance that seemed to warrant its necessity. He was a large, powerfully-built man, something beyond the prime of life, but whose build announced considerable vigour. Slightly stooped in the shoulders, the defect seemed to add to the fixity of his look, for the head was thus thrown more forward, and the expression of the deep-set eyes, overshadowed by shaggy grey eyebrows, rendered more piercing and direct. His features were massive and regular—their character that of solemnity and gravity; and as he removed his cap, he displayed a high, bold forehead, with what phrenologists would have called an extravagant development of the organs of locality. Indeed, these overhanging masses almost imparted an air of retreating to a head that was singularly straight.

"A number of letters have arrived for you, and you will find them in your room, Sir," continued Lanfranchi, as he escorted him towards the stairs. A quiet bow acknowledged this speech, and the Doctor went on: "I was charged with a message from Lord Lackington, too, who desired me to say, 'That he hoped to see you as soon as possible after your arrival.' May I inform him when you could receive him?"

"Not to-night; sometime to-morrow about twelve o'clock, or half-past, if that will suit him," said the stranger, coldly. "Is Baron Glumthal here? Well, tell him to come up to me, and let them send me some tea."

"May I mention your arrival to his Lordship, for I know his great anxiety?"

"Just as you please," said the other, in the same quiet tone; while he bowed in a fashion to dismiss his visitor.

Having glanced casually at the addresses of a number of letters, he only opened one or two, and looked cursorily over their contents, and then opening a window which looked over the lake, he placed a chair on the balcony and sat down, as if to rest and reflect in the fresh and still night air. It was a calm and quiet atmosphere—not a leaf stirred, not a ripple moved the glassy surface of the lake—so that as he sat he could overhear Doctor

Lanfranchi's voice beneath announcing his arrival to Lord Lackington.

"If he can receive Glumthal, why can't he see *me*?" asked the Viscount, testily. "You must go back and tell him that I desire particularly to meet him this evening."

"If you wish, my Lord——"

"I do, Sir," repeated he, more peremptorily. "Lady Lackington and myself have been sojourning here the last three weeks awaiting this arrival, and I am at a loss to see why our patience is to be pushed further. Pray take him my message, therefore."

The Doctor, without speaking, left the room at once.

Lanfranchi was some minutes in the apartment before he discovered where the stranger was sitting, and then approaching him softly he communicated his lordship's request.

"I am afraid you must allow me to take my own way. I have contracted an unfortunate habit in that respect," said the stranger, with a quiet smile. "Give my compliments to his Lordship, and say, that at twelve to-morrow I am at his orders; and tell Baron Glumthal that I expect him now."

Lanfranchi withdrew; and having whispered the message to the Baron, proceeded to make his communication to the Viscount.

"Very well, Sir," said Lord Lackington, haughtily interrupting; "something like an apology. Men of this sort have a business-like standard even for their politeness, and there is no necessity for me to teach them something better;" and then, turning to Twining, he added, "That was Dunn's arrival we heard a while ago."

"Oh, indeed! Very glad—quite rejoiced on your account more than my own. Dunn—Dunn; remarkable man—very," said Twining, hurriedly.

"Thank Heaven! we may be able to get away from this place to-morrow or next day," said Lord Lackington, sighing drearily.

"Yes, of course; very slow for your Lordship—no society—nothing to do."

"And the weather beginning to break?" said Lord Lackington, peevishly.

"Just so, as your Lordship most justly observes—the weather beginning to break."

"Look at that troop of horses," said the Viscount, as the postilions passed beneath the window in a long file with the cattle just released from the travelling carriages. "There goes ten—no, but twelve posters. He travels right royally—doesn't he?"

"Very handsomely, indeed; quite a pleasure to see it," said Twining, gleefully.

"These fellows have little tact, with all their worldly shrewdness, or they'd not make such ostentatious display of their wealth."

"Quite true, my Lord. It is indiscreet of them."

"It is so like saying, 'This is *our* day!'" said the Viscount.

"So it is, my Lord; and a very pleasant day they have of it, I must say; clever men—shrewd men—know the world thoroughly."

"I'm not so very sure of that, Twining," said his Lordship, smiling half superciliously. "If they really had all the worldly knowledge you attribute to them, they'd scarcely venture to shock the feelings of society by assumptions of this sort. They would have more patience, Twining—more patience."

"So they would, my Lord. Capital thing—excellent thing, patience; always rewarded in the end—great fun." And he rubbed his hands and laughed away pleasantly.

"And they'll defeat themselves, that's what will come of it, Sir," said Lord Lackington, not heeding the other's remark.

"I quite agree with your Lordship," chimed in Twining.

"And shall I tell you why they'll defeat themselves, Sir?"

"Like it of all things; take it as a great favour on your Lordship's part."

"For this reason, Twining, that they have no 'prestige'—no, Twining, they have no prestige. Now, Sir, wealth unassociated with prestige is just like—what shall I say?—it is, as it were, a sort of local rank—a kind of thing like being Brigadier in the Bombay Army, but only a Lieutenant when you're at home; so long, therefore, as these fellows are rich, they have their influence. Let them suffer a reverse of fortune, however, and where will they be, Sir?"

"Can't possibly say; but quite certain your Lordship knows—perfectly sure of it," rattled out Twining.

"I do, Sir. It is a subject on which I have bestowed considerable thought. I may go further and say, one which I have reduced to a sort of theory. These men are signs of the times—emblems of our era; just like the Cholera, the Electric Telegraph, or the Gold Fields of Australia. We must not accept them as normal, do you perceive; they are the abnormal incidents of our age."

"Quite true; most just; very like the Electric Telegraph!" muttered Twining.

"And by that very condition, only exercising a passing influence on our society, Sir," said his Lordship, pursuing his own train of thought.

"Perfectly correct; rapid as lightning."

"And when they do pass away, Sir," continued the Viscount, "they leave no trace of their existence behind them. The bubble burst, the surface of the stream remains without a ripple. I myself may live to see—you in all probability will live to see."

"Your Lordship far more likely—sincerely trust as much," said Twining, bowing.

"Well, Sir, it matters little which of us is to witness the extinction of this Plutocracy." And as his Lordship enunciated this last word, he walked off like one who had totally exhausted his subject.

CHAPTER VIII.

MR. DUNN.

MR. DAVENPORT DUNN sat at breakfast in his spacious chamber overlooking the Lake of Como. In addition to the material appliances of that meal, the table was covered with newly-arrived letters, and newspapers, maps, surveys, railroad, sections, and Parliamentary blue-books littered about, along with chalk drawings, oil miniatures, some carvings in box and ivory, and a few bronzes of rare beauty and design. Occasionally skimming over the newspapers—now sipping his tea—or now examining some object of art through a magnifier—he dallied over his meal like one who felt the time thus passed a respite from the task of the day. At last he walked out, and, leaning over the balcony, gazed at the glorious landscape at his feet. It was early morning, and the great masses of misty clouds were slowly beginning to move up the Alps, disclosing as they went spots of bright green verdure, dark-sided ravines and cataracts, amid patches of pine forest, or dreary tracts of snow still lying deep in the mountain clefts. Beautiful as was the picture of the lake itself, and the wooded promontories along it, his eyes never turned from the rugged grandeur of the Alpine range, which he continued to gaze at for a long time. So absorbed was he in his contemplation, that he never noticed the approach of another, and Baron Glumthal was already leaning over the balustrade beside him ere he had perceived him.

"Well, is it more assuring now that you have looked at it?" asked the German, in English, of which there was the very slightest trace of a foreign accent.

"I see nothing to deter one from the project," said Dunn, slowly. "These questions resolve themselves purely into two conditions—time and money. The Grand Army was only a corporal's guard, multiplied by hundreds of thousands."

"But the difficulties——"

"Difficulties!" broke in Dunn; "thank Heaven for them, Baron, or you and I would be no better off in this world than the herd about us. Strong heads and stout hearts are the breaching artillery of mankind—you can find rank and file any day."

"When I said difficulties, I might have used a stronger word."

"And yet," said Dunn, smiling, "I'd rather contract to turn the Alps yonder, than to drive a new idea into the heads of a people. See here, now," said he, entering the room, and returning with a large plan in his hand, "this is Chiavenna. Well, the levels show that a line drawn from this spot comes out below Andeer, at a place called Mühlen—the distance something less than twenty-two miles. By Brumall's contract, you will perceive that if he don't meet with water——"

"But in that lies the whole question," broke in the other.

"I know it, and I am not going to blink it. I mean to take the alternatives in turn."

"Shall I spare you a deal of trouble, Dunn?" said the German, laying his hand on his arm. "Our house has decided against the enterprise. I have no need to explain the reasons."

"And can you be swayed by such counsels?" cried Dunn, eagerly. "Is it possible that you will suffer yourselves to be made the dupes of a Russian intrigue?"

"Say, rather, the agents of a great policy," said Glumthal, "and you will be nearer the mark. My dear friend," added he, in a lower and more confidential tone, "have I to tell *you* that *your* whole late policy in England is a mistake—your Crimean war a mistake—your French alliance a mistake—and your present attempt at a reconciliation with Austria the greatest mistake of all?"

"You would find it a hard task to make the nation believe this," said Dunn, smiling.

"So I might; but not to convince your statesmen of it. They see it already. They perceive even now some of the perils of the course they have adopted."

"The old story. I have heard it at least a hundred times," broke in Dunn. "We have been overturning the breakwaters that the ocean may swamp us. But I tell *you*, Baron, that the more democratic we grow in England, the safer we become. We don't want these alliances we fancied ourselves once in need of. That family compact redounded but little to our advantage."

"So it might. But there is another compact now forming, which bodes even less favourably to you. The Church, by her Concordat, is replacing the old Holy Alliance. You'll need the

aid of the only power that cannot be drawn into this league—I mean the only great power—Russia.”

“If you will wait till we are so minded, Baron,” said Dunn, laughing, “you have plenty of time to help me with my tunnel here.” And he pointed to his plans.

“And where will the world be—I mean your world and mine—before the pick of the workman reaches so far?”—and he placed his finger on the Splugen Alps—“answer me that. What will be the Government of France—I don’t ask who? Where will Naples be? What king will be convoking the Hungarian Diet? Who will be the Russian viceroy on the Danube?”

“Far more to the purpose were it if I could tell you how would the Three per Cents. stand,” broke in Dunn.

“I’m coming to that,” said the other, dryly. “No, no,” said he, after a pause; “let us see this unhappy war finished—let us wait till we know who are to be partners in the great game of European politics. Lanfranchi tells me that the French and Russians who meet here come together on the best of terms; that intimacies, and even friendships, spring up rapidly between them. This fact, if repeated in Downing-street, might be heard with some misgiving.”

Though Dunn affected indifference to this remark, he winced, and walked to the window to hide his irritation.

Immediately beneath where he stood, a trellised vine-walk led down to the lake, where the boats were usually in waiting; and from this alley now a number of voices could be heard, although the speakers were entirely hidden by the foliage. The gay and laughing tones indicated a pleasure-party; and such it was, bent on a pic-nic to Bellaggio. Some were loud in praises of the morning, and the splendid promise of the day; others discussed how many boats they should want, and how the party was to be divided.

“The Americans with the Russians,” said Twining, slapping his legs and laughing; “great friends—capital allies—what fun! Ourselves and the O’Reillys.—Spicer, look out, and see if they are coming.”

“And do you mean to say you’ll not come?” whispered a very soft voice, after the crowd had passed on.

“Charmente Molly!” said Lord Lackington, in his most dulcet of accents, “I am quite heart-broken at the disappointment; but when I tell you that this man has come some hundreds of miles to meet me here—that the matter is one of deepest importance——”

"And who is he? Could you make him come too?"

"Impossible, *ma belle*. He is quite unsuited to this kind of thing—a mere creature of parchments. The very sight of him would only suggest thoughts of foreclosing mortgages and renewal fines."

"How I hate him!"

"Do, dearest—hate him to your heart's content—and for nothing more than the happiness of which he robs me."

"Well, I'm sure, I did think——" And she stopped, and seemed confused.

"And what, pray, was it that you did think?" said his Lordship, most winningly.

"I thought two things, then, if you must know," said she, archly. "First, that a great personage like your Lordship, would make a very small one like this Mr. Dunn understand it was his duty to await your convenience; and my second thought was——But perhaps you don't care to hear it?"

"Of all things. Pray go on."

"Well, then, my second was, that if I asked you to come, you'd not refuse me."

"What an inexorable charmer it is!" cried he, in stage fashion. "Do you fancy you could ever forgive yourself, if, yielding to this temptation, I were really to miss this man?"

"You told me yourself, only yesterday," said she, "*ce que femme veut*——Besides, you'll have him all day to-morrow, and the next, and——"

"Well, so be it. See how I hug my chains," said he, drawing her arm within his, and moving on towards the boat.

"Were you to be of that party, Baron?" asked Dunn, pointing to the crowd beside the lake.

"So I was. The Princess engaged me last night; they are going to the Plinniana and Bellaggio. Why not join us?"

"Oh, I have a score of letters to write, and double as many to read. In fact, I have kept all my work for a quiet day in this nice tranquil spot. I wish I could take a week here."

"And why not do it? Haven't you yet learned that it is the world's duty to wait on *us*? For my own part, I have always found that one emerges from these secluded places with renewed energy and awakened vigour. I heard Stadeon once say that when anything puzzled him, he went to pass a day at Maria Zell, and he never came away without hitting on the solution. They are beckoning to me, so good-by!"

"Anything puzzled him!" muttered Dunn, repeating the

words of the other's story. "If he but knew that what puzzles me at this moment is myself!"

The very nature of the correspondence that then littered his table might well warrant what he felt. Who, and what was he, to whom great ministers wrote confidentially, and secretaries of state began, "My dear Dunn?" How had he risen to this eminence? What were the gifts by which he held, and was to maintain it? Most men who have attained to high station from small beginnings, have so conformed to the exigencies of each new change in life as to carry but little of what they started with to their position of eminence; gradually assimilating to the circumstances around them as they went, they flung the past behind them, only occupied with those qualities which should fit them for the future. Not so Davenport Dunn; he was ever present to his own eyes as the son of the very humblest parentage—the poor boy educated by charity, struggling drearily through years of poverty—the youth discouraged and slighted—the man repulsed and rejected. Certain incidents of his life never left him; there they were, as if photographed on his heart; and at will he could behold himself, as he was turned away ignominiously from Kellett's house; or a morning scarce less sad, as he learned his rejection for the sizarship; or the day still more bitter that Lord Glengariff put him out of doors, with words of insult and shame. Like avenging spirits, these memories travelled with him wherever he journeyed. They sat beside him as he dined at great men's tables; they loitered with him in his lonely walks, and whispered into his ear in the dark hours of the night. No high-hearted hope, no elevating self-reliance, had sustained him through these youthful reverses; each new failure, on the contrary, seemed to have impressed him more and more strongly with the conviction that the gifts which win success in life had not been vouchsafed him; that his abilities were of that humble order which never elevate their possessor above mere mediocrity; that if he meant to strive for the great prizes of life, it must be less by addressing himself to great intellectual efforts than by a patient study of men themselves—of their frailties, their weaknesses, and their follies. Whatever he had seen of the world had shown him how invariably the greatest minds were alloyed with some deteriorating influence, and that passions of one kind or other, ambitions more or less worthy, even the subtlety of flattery, swayed those whose intellects soared loftily among their fellows. "I cannot share in the tilt with these," said he. "Mine are no

gifts of eloquence or imaginative power ; I am not versed in the mysteries of science, nor deep-read in the intricacies of law. Let me, however, see if I cannot, by dexterity, accomplish what is denied to my strength. Every man, whatever his station, covets wealth. The noblest and the meanest, the man dignified by exalted aspirations, the true creature of selfish enjoyments, are all alike enlisted in the pursuit. Let me consider how this common tendency may be best turned to account. To enrich others, it is not necessary that I should be wealthy myself. The geographer may safely dictate the route by which the explorer is to journey through a desert he has never travelled himself. The great problems of finance can be worked by suggestions in a garret, though their application may demand millions." Starting thus from an humble attorney in a country town, he gradually grew to be known as a most capable adviser in all monetary matters : rich men consulted him about profitable investments and safe employment of their capital ; embarrassed men confided to him their difficulties, and sought his aid to meet them ; speculators asked his advice as to this or that venture ; and even those who gambled on the eventful fortunes of a ministry were fain to be guided by his wise predictions. "Dunn has got me the money on reasonable terms"—"Dunn has managed to let me have five per cent."—"Dunn assures me I may risk this"—"Dunn tells me that they'll carry the bill next session,"—such and such things were the phrases one heard at every turn, till his opinion became a power in the land, and he grew to feel it so.

This first step led to another and higher one. Through the moneyed circumstances of men he came to learn their moral natures : against what temptations this one was proof ; to what that other would yield ; what were the goals for which each were striving ; what the secret doubts and misgivings that beset them. What the doctor was to the world of sickness and infirmity did he become to the world of human passion and desire. Men came to him with the same unreserve—they stripped before him and laid bare the foul spots of their heart's disease, as though it were but repeating the story to themselves. Terrible and harrowing as are the tales which reach the physician's ears, the stories revealed to his were more terrible and harrowing still. They came to him with narratives of reckless waste and ruin ; with histories of debt that dated a century back ; with worse, far worse—with tales of forgery and fraud. Crimes for which the law would have exacted its last expiation were

whispered to him in that dreary confessional—his private office—and the evidences of guilt placed in his hands that he might read and reflect over them. And as the doctor moves through life with the sad knowledge of all the secret suffering around him—how little that “flush” indicates of health, how faintly beats the heart that seems to swell with happiness—so did this man walk a world that was a mere hospital ward of moral rottenness. Why should the priest and the physician be the only men to trade upon the infirmities of human nature? Why should they be the sole depositaries of those mysteries by which men’s actions can be swayed and moulded? By what temptations are men so assailable as those that touch their material fortunes, and why not make this moral country an especial study? Such were his theory and his practice.

There is often a remarkable fitness—may we call it a “pre-established harmony?”—between men and the circumstances of their age, and this has led to the opinion that it is by the events themselves the agents are developed; we incline to think differently, as the appearance of both together is rather in obedience to some over-ruling edict of Providence which has alike provided the work and the workmen. It would be a shallow reading of history to imagine Cromwell the child of the Revolution, or Napoleon as the accident of the battle of the sections.

Davenport Dunn sprang into eminence when, by the action of the Encumbered Estates Court, a great change was operated in the condition of Ireland. To grasp at once the immense consequences of a tremendous social revolution—to foresee even some of the results of this sweeping confiscation—required no common knowledge of the country, and no small insight into its habits. The old feudalism that had linked the fate of a starving people with the fortunes of a ruined gentry was to be extinguished at once, and a great experiment tried. Was Ireland to be more governable in prosperity than in adversity? This was a problem which really might not seem to challenge much doubt, and yet was it by no means devoid of difficulty to those minds who had long based their ideas of ruling that land on the principles of fomenting its dissensions and separating its people. Davenport Dunn saw the hesitation of the moment, and offered himself at once to solve the difficulty. The transfer of property might be conducted in such a way as to favour the views of a particular party in the state: the new proprietary might be selected, and the aim of a government consulted in the establishment of this new

squirearchy. He thought so at least, and, what is more, he persuaded a chief secretary to believe him.

Nothing reads more simply than the sale of an encumbered estate: "In the matter of Sir Roger O'Moore, Bart., Brian O'Moore, and Margaret Halliday, owners, and Paul Maybey, petitioner, the Commissioners will, on Friday next, at the hour of noon,"—and so on; and then come the descriptive particulars of Carrickross, Dummaymagan, and Lantygoree, with Griffith's valuation and the ordnance survey, concluding with a recital of all the penalties, reservations, covenants, clauses, &c., with the modest mention of twenty odd pounds some shillings tithe-rent charge, for a finish. To dispossess of this a man that never really owned it for the last forty years, and invest it in another, who never saw it, was the easy operation of the auctioneer's hammer, and with a chief commissioner to ratify the sale, few things seemed easier than the whole process. Still there are certain aspects in the transaction which suggest reflection. What were the ties, what the relations, between the original owner and the tenantry who held under him? What kind of social system had bound them—what were the mutual services they rendered each other? For the reverence and respect tendered on one side, and for the thousand little charities and kindnesses bestowed on the other, what was to be the compensation? How was that guidance and direction, more or less inherent in those who are the heads of a neighbourhood, to be replaced? Was it quite certain that the incoming proprietor would care to study the habits, the tastes, and the tempers of the peasantry on his estate, learn their ways, or understand their difficulties? And, lastly, what new political complexion would the country wear? Would it become more Conservative or more Whig, more Democratic or more Saxon?

Davenport Dunn's opinion was, that the case was precisely that of a new colony, where the first settlers, too busy about their material interests to care for mere speculative questions, would attach themselves heartily to any existing government, giving their adhesion to whatever afforded protection to their property and safety to their lives. "Take this new colony," said he, "into your especial care, and their sons and grandsons will be yours afterwards. A new regiment is being raised—write your own legends on their colours, and they are your own." He sketched out a system by which this new squirearchy was to be dealt with—how courted, flattered, and rewarded. He showed how, in attaching them to the state, the government of the

country might be rendered more easy, and the dreaded influence of the priest be antagonised most effectually; and, finally, demonstrated that Ireland, which had been the stereotyped difficulty of every administration, might now be turned into a stronghold against opposition.

To replace the great proprietary whose estates were now in the market by a new constituency in accordance with his views, was therefore his general scheme, and he addressed himself to this task with all his peculiar energy. He organised the registry of all the encumbered estates of Ireland, with every detail which could illustrate the various advantages; he established an immense correspondence with English capitalists eager for new investments; he possessed himself of intimate knowledge of all the variations and fluctuations which attend the money market at certain periods, so that he knew the most favourable moments to suggest speculation; and, lastly, he had craft enough to carry his system into operation without any suspicion being attached to it; and was able to say to a Viceroy, "Look and judge for yourself, my Lord, whose influence is now paramount in Ireland."

Truly, it was not easy for a government to ignore him—his name turned up at every moment. From the stirring incident of a great county election to the small contest for a poor-law guardianship, he figured everywhere, until every question of policy became coupled with the inevitable demand, "What does Dunn think of it?"

Like all men of strong ambition, he encouraged few or no intimacies; he had actually no friendships. He wanted no counsels—nor would he have stooped to have laid a case for advice before any one. Partly in consequence of this he was spoken of generally in terms of depreciation and discredit. Some called him lucky—a happy phrase that adapts itself to any fancy; some said he was a common-place, vulgar fellow, with certain business aptitudes, but quite incapable of any wide or extended views; some again went further, and said he was the mere tool of certain clever heads that did not care to figure in the foreground; and not a few wondered that "a man of this kind" should have ever attained to any eminence or station in the land.

"You'll see how his Excellency will turn him to account; he knows how to deal with fellows of this stamp," said a Private Secretary in the Castle.

"I have no doubt, sir, Mr. Davenport Dunn would agree with

you," said the Attorney-General, with a sneer; "but the opinion would be bad in law!"

"He's not very much of a churchman, I suspect," whispered a Bishop; "but we find him occasionally useful."

"He serves *our* purpose!" pompously spoke a Country Gentleman, who really, in the sentiment, represented a class.

Such was the man who now sat alone, communing with himself, in his room at the Villa d'Este. **Let us believe that he had enough to think of.**

CHAPTER IX.

A DAY ON THE LAKE OF COMO.

WE fully sympathise with Lord Lackington, who preferred the pic-nic and the society of Miss Molly O'Reilly to the cares of business and an interview with Davenport Dunn. The Lake of Como, on a fine day of summer or early autumn, and with a heart moderately free from the anxieties and sorrows of life, is a very enjoyable locality, and essentially so to a man of the world like the noble Viscount, who liked to have the more romantic features of the scene blended with associations of ease and pleasure, and be able to turn from the contemplation of Alpine ruggedness to the sight of some terraced garden, glowing in the luxuriance of its vegetation. Never, perhaps, was there ever a spot so calculated to appeal successfully to the feelings of men of his stamp. There was mountain grandeur and desolation—snow-peak and precipice; but all in the back distance, not near enough to suggest even the fear of cold, or the disagreeable idea of a sledge journey. There were innumerable villas of every style and class: some, spacious and splendid enough for royal residences; others, coquettish little *châlets*, where lovers might pass the honeymoon. There were tasteful pavilions over the very lake—snug spots where solitude might love to ponder, a student read, or an idler enjoy his cigar, in the most enviable of scenes. Trellised vine-walks zigzagged up the hills to some picturesque shrine whose modest little spire rose above the olive-trees, or some rude steps in the rock led down to a little nook, whose white sands glistened beneath the crystal waters—such a bath as no Sybarite, in all his most glowing fancy, ever imagined. And amid all, and through all, there was that air of wealth—that assurance of affluence and abundance—which comes so home to the hearts of men whose sense of enjoyment can only be gratified where there is to be no sacrifice to their

love of ease. In the noble Viscount's estimation, the place was perfect. It was even associated with the solitary bit of romance of his whole life. It was here that he passed the first few weeks after his wedding; and though he had preserved very little of those feelings which imparted happiness to that period, though her Ladyship did not recal to his mind the attractions which once had fascinated him—new glazed and new lacquered over and over again as was the vase—"the scent of the roses had clung to it still." The distance that lends enchantment to the material, has also its influence on the moral, picture. Memory softens and subdues many a harsh tint, mellows many an incongruity, and blends into a pleasant harmony many things which, in their proximity, were the reverse of agreeable. Not that we would be understood to say that Lord Lackington's honeymoon was not like yours, an elysium of happiness and bliss; we would simply imply that, in recalling it, he only remembered the rose-tints, and never brought up one of the shadows. He had, in his own fashion, poetised that little episode of his life, when, dressed in a fancy and becoming costume, he played Gondolier to his young bride, scaled the mountain to fetch her Alp-roses, and read aloud "Childe Harold," as he interpolated Harrow recollections of its author. Not one of these did he now remember—he'd as soon have dreamed of being marker at a billiard-table, as of playing the Barcarole; and as to mountain excursions, he'd not have bargained for any success that required the exertion of a steep staircase.

"There's a little villa in a bay, somewhere hereabouts," said he, as the boat glided smoothly along; "I should like much to show it to you." This was addressed to Molly O'Reilly, who sat beside him. "Do you happen to know La Pace?" asked he of one of the boatmen.

"To be sure I do, Eccellenza. Who doesn't? My own father was barcarole there to a great milordo, I can't say how many years back. Ah," added he, laughing, "what stories he used to have of that same milordo, who was always dressing himself up to be a gondolier or a chamois hunter."

"We haven't asked for your father's memoirs, my good fellow; we only wanted you to show us where La Pace lies," said the Viscount, testily.

"There it is, then, Eccellenza," said the man, as they rounded a little promontory of rock, and came in full view of a small cove, in the centre of which stood the villa.

Untenanted and neglected as it was, there was yet about

it that glorious luxuriance of vegetation—that rare growth of vines and olive, and oleander and cactus, which seems to more than compensate all the care and supervision of men. The overloaded orange-trees dipped their weary branches in the lake, where the golden balls rose and fell as the water surged about them. The tangled vines sprawled over the ground, staining the deep grass with their purple blood. Olive berries lay deep around, and a thousand perfumes loaded the air as the faint breeze stirred it.

“Let me show you a true Italian villa,” said the Viscount, as the boat glided up to the steps cut in the marble rock. “I once passed a few weeks here; a caprice seized me to know what kind of life it would be to loiter amidst olive groves, and have no other company than the cicada and the green lizard.”

“Faith, my Lord,” said O’Reilly, “if you could live upon figs and lemons you’d have nothing to complain of, but I’m thinking you found it lonely.”

“I scarcely remember, but my impression is, I liked it,” said he, with a slight hesitation. “I used to lie under the great cedar, yonder, and read Petrarch.”

“Capital fun—excellent—live here for two hundred a year, or even less—plenty of fish in the lake—keep the servants on water melons,” said Twining, slapping his legs, as he made this domestic calculation to himself.

“With people one liked about one,” said Miss O’Reilly, “I don’t see why this shouldn’t be a delicious spot.”

“There’s not a hundred yards of background. You couldn’t give a horse walking exercise here, if your life was on it,” said Spicer, contemptuously.

“Splendid grapes, wonderful oranges, finest melons I ever saw, all going to waste, too,” said Twining, laughing, as if such utter neglect was a very droll thing. “Get this place a bargain—might have it for a mere nothing.”

“So you might, O’Reilly,” said the Viscount; “it is one of those deserted spots that are picked up for a tenth of their value; buy it, fit it up handsomely, and we’ll come and spend the autumn with you, won’t we, Twining?”

“Upon my life we will, I’ll swear it; be here 1st September to the day, and stay till—as long as you please. Great fun.”

“Delicious spot to come and repose in from the cares and worries of life,” said Lord Lackington, as he stretched upon a bench and began peeling an orange.

"I'd get the blue devils in a week—I'd be found hanging some fine morning——"

"For shame, papa," broke in Molly. "My Lord says he'd come on a visit to us, and you know we'd only be here in the autumn."

"Just so—come here for the wine season—get in your olives and look after your oil—great fun," chimed in Twining, merrily.

"I declare I'd like it of all things, would not you?" said the elder girl to Spicer, who had now begun to reflect that there was a kind of straw-yard season for men as well as for hunters—when the great object was to live cheap and husband your resources; and as he ruminated over the lazy quietness of an existence that would cost nothing—when even his *Bell's Life* should be inserted amongst the family extraordinaries—he vouchsafed to approve the scheme, and in his mumbling tone, in imitation of Heaven knows what celebrated sporting character, he grumbled out, "Make the governor go in for it, by all means!"

Twining had entered into the project most eagerly. One of the most marked traits of his singular mind was not merely to enjoy his own pre-eminence in wealth over so many others, but to chuckle over all the possible mistakes which *he* had escaped and *they* had fallen into. To know that there was a speculation whose temptation he had resisted and which had engulfed all who engaged in it—to see the bank fail whose directorship he had refused—or the railroad smashed whose preference shares he had rejected,—this was an intense delight to him, and on such occasions was it that he slapped his lean legs most enthusiastically, and exclaimed, "What fun!" with the true zest of enjoyment.

To plant a man of O'Reilly's stamp in such a soil seemed, therefore, about the best practical joke he had ever heard of, and so he walked him over the villa, discoursing eloquently on all the advantages of the project—the great social position it would confer—the place he would occupy in the country—the soundness of the investment—the certainty of securing great matches for the girls. "What a view that window opened of the Splugen Alps!—what a delicious spot, this little room, to sip one's claret of an autumn evening! Think of the dessert growing almost into the very dining-room, and your trout leaping within a yard of the breakfast table! Austrians charmed to have you—make you a Count—a Hof something or other, at once—give you a cross—great fun, eh?—Graf O'Reilly—sound admirably—do it by all means."

While Twining's attack was being conducted in this fashion, Lord Lackington was not less industriously pursuing his plan of campaign elsewhere. He had sauntered with Molly into the garden and a little pavilion at the end of it, where the lake was seen in one of its most picturesque aspects. It was a well-known spot to him; he had passed many an evening on that low window-seat, half-dreamingly forgetting himself in the peaceful scene—half consciously recalling pleasant nights at Brookes's, and gay dinners at Carlton House. Here was it that he first grew hipped with matrimony, and so sated with its happiness, that he actually began to long for any little disaster that might dash the smooth monotony of his life; and yet now, by one of those strange tricks memory plays us, he fancied that the moments he had once passed here had never been equalled in all his after life.

"I'm certain, though you won't confess," said she, after one of his most eloquent bursts of remembered enjoyment—"I'm certain you were very much in love, those days."

"An ideal passion, perhaps, a poetised vision of that bright creature who should, one day or other, sway this poor heart," and he flattened the creases of his spotless white waistcoat; "but if you mean that I knew of any, had ever seen any, until now, this very moment——"

"Stop! remember your promise," said she, laughing.

"But charmante Molly, I'm only mortal," said he, with an air of such superb humility, that made her at once remember it was a peer who said it.

"Mortals must keep their words," said she, pertly. "The condition on which I consented to accept your companionship was——But I needn't remind you."

"No, do not, dear Molly, for I shall be delighted to forget it. You are aware that no law ever obliged a man to do what was impossible; and that to exact any pledge from him to such an end is in itself an illegality. You little suspected, therefore, that it was you, not I, was the delinquent."

"All I know is, that you assured me you'd not—you'd not talk nonsense," said she, blushing deeply, half angry, half ashamed.

"Oh! never guessed you were here," broke in Twining, as he peeped through the window. "Sweet spot—so quiet and secluded—capital fun!"

"There is *such* a view from this, papa," said Molly, in some confusion at Twining's bantering look; "come round and see it."

"I have just been telling this dear girl of yours, O'Reilly,

that you ought to make this place your own," said Lord Lackington. "Don't fancy you'd be out of the world here. Why there's the Villa d'Este, a European celebrity at once—it will be thronged next year to suffocation. The *Galignani*, I see, has already mentioned myself and Lady Lackington as among the visitors. These things have their effect. The press in our day is an estate."

"Indeed, I'm sure of it. There was a cousin of my wife's drew his two hundred a year out of the *Tyrawley Express*—a daily little paper that maybe your Lordship never seen."

"When I said an estate, sir, I rather alluded to a recognised condition of power and influence than to mere wealth. Not, I will add, that I am one of those who approve of this consummation; nor can I see how men of my order can ever so regard it."

"Well," said O'Reilly, sighing, as though the confession cost something, "there's nothing equal to a newspaper. I'm reading *Saunders* this eight-and-forty years, and I own to you I never found one I liked so much. For you see, my Lord, it's the same with a paper as with your house—you ought to know where to lay your hand on what you want. Now, you might as well put me in Buckingham Palace, and tell me to find my bedroom, as give me the *Times* and bid me discover the Viceregal Court. If they mention it at all, it's among the accidents and offences."

"Castle festivities—Patrick's Hall—great fun!" said Twining, laughing pleasantly, for he cherished some merry recollections of these hospitalities.

"Have you——But of course you were too young for presentation," said his Lordship to Molly.

"We weren't out; but, in any case, I'm sure we'd not have been there," said Molly.

"The pleasure of that presentation may perhaps be reserved for me, who knows?" said the Viscount, graciously. "If our people come in, it is the post they'd offer me."

"Lord-Lieutenant!" said Molly, opening her eyes to the fullest.

"Even so, ma belle. Shall we rehearse the ceremony of presentation? Twining, do you perform the Chamberlain. Stand aside O'Reilly—be a gentleman at large, or an Ulster King-at-Arms. Now for it." And so saying, he drew himself proudly up to an attitude of considerable dignity, while Twining, muttering to himself, "What fun!" announced aloud, "Miss Molly O'Reilly, your Excellency;" at which, and before she was aware, his Excellency stepped one step in advance, and

saluted her on either cheek with a cordiality that covered her with blushes.

"That's not it, at all, I'm certain," said she, half angrily.

"On my life, it's the exact ceremony, and no more," said the Viscount. Then resuming the performance, he added, "Take care, Twining, that she is put on your list for the balls. O'Reilly, your niece is charming."

"My niece—sure she's——"

"You forget, my worthy friend, that we are enacting Viceroy, and cannot charge our memory with the ties of kindred."

Spicer now came up to say that a thunderstorm was threatening, and that the wisest course would probably be to land the luncheon and remain where they were till the hurricane should pass over. The proposition was at once approved of, and the party were soon busily occupying themselves in the cares for the entertainment; all agreeing that they felt no regret at being separated from the other boat, which had proceeded up the lake; in fact, as Mr. O'Reilly said, "they were snigger as they were, without the Roosians,"—a sentiment in various ways acknowledged by the rest.

Strange freemasonry is there in conviviality: the little preparations for this pic-nic dinner disseminated amidst them all the fellowship of old acquaintance, and, as they assisted and aided each other, a degree of kindness grew up that bound them together like a family. Each vied with each in displaying his power of usefulness and agreeability; even the noble Viscount, who actually did nothing whatever, so simulated occupation and activity, that he was regarded by all as the very life and soul of the party. And yet we are unjust in saying he did nothing, for he it was, who by the happy charm of his manner, the ready tact of a consummate man of the world, imparted to the meeting its great success. Unused to the agreeable qualities of such men, O'Reilly felt all the astonishment that great conversational gifts inspire, and sat amazed and delighted at the stores of pleasant stories, witty remarks, and acute observations poured out before him.

He knew nothing of the skill by which these abilities were guided, nor how, like cunning shopkeepers dressing their wares to most advantage, such men exhibit their qualities with all the artifice of display. He never suspected the subtle flattery by which he was led to fancy himself the intimate of men whose names were freely talked of before him, till at length the atmosphere of the great world was to him like the air he had breathed from childhood.

"How the Prince would have relished O'Reilly," said the Viscount to Twining, in a whisper easily overheard. "That racy humour, that strong native common sense, that vigorous disregard of petty obstacles wherever he is bent on following out a path—his Royal Highness would have appreciated all these."

"Unquestionably—been charmed with them—thought him most agreeable—great fun."

"You remind me of O'Kelly—Colonel O'Kelly—O'Reilly; strange enough, too, each of you should be of that same old Celtic blood. But perhaps it is just that very element that gives you the peculiar social fascination I was alluding to. You are not old enough, Twining, to remember that small house with the bay-windows opening on the Birdcage-walk; it was like a country parsonage dropped down in the midst of London, with honeysuckles over the porch, and peacocks on the lawn in front of it. O'Kelly and Payne lived there together—the two pleasantest bachelors that ever joined in partnership. The Prince dined with them by agreement every Friday. The charm of the thing was no state, no parade whatever. It was just as if O'Reilly here were to take this villa, and say, 'Now, Lackington, I am rich enough to enjoy myself, I don't want the worry and fatigue of hunting out the pleasant people of the world; but you know them all, you understand them—their ways, their wants, and their requirements—just tell me frankly, couldn't we manage to make this their rallying spot throughout Europe? Settled down here in the midst of the most lovely scenery in the world, with a good cook and a good cellar, might not this place become a perfect Paradise?'"

"If I only knew that your Lordship, just yourself alone, and of course the present company," added O'Reilly, with a bow round the table, "would vouchsafe me the honour of a visit, I'd be proud to be the owner of this place to-morrow. Indeed, I don't see why we wouldn't be as well here as trapesing over the world in dust and heat. If, then, the girls see no objection——"

"I should like it of all things, papa," broke in Miss O'Reilly.

"I am charmed with the very thought of it," cried Molly.

"Capital thought—romantic notion—save any amount of money, and no taxes," muttered Twining.

"There's no approach by land, whatever," said Spicer, who foresaw that all his horse capabilities would receive no development here.

"All the better," broke in Twining; "no interlopers—no

fellows cantering down to luncheon, or driving over to dine—must come by boat, and be seen an hour beforehand.”

“If I know anything of my friend here,” said the Viscount, “his taste will rather lie in the fashion of a warm welcome than a polite denial to a visitor. You must talk to Lanfranchi about the place to-morrow, O’Reilly. He’s a shrewd fellow, and knows how to go about these things.”

“Faith, my Lord, I see everything in sunshine so long as I sit in such company. It’s the very genial kind of thing I like. A few friends—if I’m not taking too great a liberty——”

“No; by no means, O’Reilly. The esteem I feel for you, and that Twining feels for you”—here his Lordship looked over at Spicer and slightly nodded, as though to say, “There is another there who requires no formal mention in the deed”—“are not passing sentiments, and we sincerely desire they may be accepted as true friendship.”

“To be sure—unquestionably—great regard—unbounded admiration—what fun!” muttered Twining, half aloud.

The evening wore along in pleasant projects for the future. Spicer had undertaken to provide workmen and artificers of various kinds to repair and decorate the villa and its grounds. He knew of such a gardener, too; and he thought, by a little bribery and a trip down to Naples, he might seduce the Prince of Syracuse’s cook—a Sicilian, worth all the Frenchmen in the world for an ultramontane “cuisine.” In fact, ere the bright moonlight on the lake reminded them of their journey homeward, they had arranged a plan of existence for the O’Reillys almost Elysian in its enjoyments.

Few things develop more imaginative powers than the description of a mode of life wherein “money is no object,” and wishing and having are convertible terms. Let a number of people—the least gifted though they be with the graces of fancy—so picture forth such an existence, and see how, by the mere multiplication of various tastes, they will end by creating a most voluptuous and splendid tableau. O’Reilly’s counsellors were rather adepts in their way, and certainly they did not forget one single ingredient of pleasure; till, when the boat glided into the little bay of the D’Este, such a story of a life was sketched out as nothing out of fairy-land could rival.

“I’ll have it, my Lord; the place is as good as mine this minute,” said O’Reilly, as he stepped on shore; and as he spoke his heart thrilled with the concentrated delights of a whole life of happiness.

CHAPTER X.

A "SMALL DINNER."

LADY LACKINGTON and Lady Grace Twining passed the morning together. Their husbands' departure on the pic-nic excursion offered them a suitable subject to discuss those gentlemen, and they improved the occasion to some purpose.

The Viscountess did not, indeed, lean very heavily on her lord's failings; they were, as she described them, the harmless follies of certain middle-aged gentlemen, who, despite time and years, would still be charming and fascinating. "He likes those little easy conquests he is so sure of amongst vulgar people," said she. "He affects only to be amused by them, but he actually likes them; and then, as he never indulges in this sort of thing except in out-of-the way places, why there's no great harm in it."

Lady Grace agreed with her, and sighed. She sighed, because she thought of her own burden, and how far more heavily it pressed. Twining's were no little foibles—no small weaknesses; none of his faults had their root in any easy self-deceptions. Everything he did, or said, or thought, was maturely weighed and considered; his gay, laughing manner—his easy, light-hearted gesticulation—his ready concurrence in the humour about him, were small coin that he scattered freely while he pondered over heavy investments.

From long experience of his crafty, double-dealing nature, coupled with something very near aversion to him, Lady Grace had grown to believe that in all he said or did some unseen motive lay, and she brought herself to believe that even his avaricious and miserly habits were practised still less for the sake of saving than for some ulterior and secret end.

Of the wretched life they led she drew a dreary picture: a mock splendour for the world—a real misery at home; all the

outward semblance of costly living—all the internal consciousness of meanness and privation. He furnished houses with magnificence that he might let them; he set up splendid equipages, that, when seen, they should be sold. "My very emeralds," said she, "were admired and bought by the Duchess of Windermere. It is very difficult to say that there is anything out of which he cannot extract a profit. If my ponies were praised in the Park, I knew it was only the prelude to their being at Tattersall's in the morning; even the camelia which I wore in my hair was turned to advantage, for it sold the conservatory that raised it. And yet they tell me that if—they say that—I mean—I am told that the law would not construe these as cruelty, but simply a very ordinary exercise of marital authority, something unpleasant, perhaps, but not enough to warrant complaint, still less resistance."

"But they *are* cruelties," broke in Lady Lackington; "men in Mr. Twining's rank of life do not beat their wives——"

"No, they only break their hearts," sighed Lady Grace; "and this, I believe, is perfectly legal."

"They were doing, or going to do, something about that t'other day in the Lords. That dear old man, Lord Cloudeslie, had a bill, or an amendment to somebody's bill, by which—I'm not sure I'm quite correct about it—but I believe it gave the wife power to take her settlement. No, that is not it: she was to be able, after five years of great cruelty——I'm afraid I have no clear recollection of its provisions, but I know the odious Chancellor said it would effectually make women independent of men."

"Of course it never will become law, then," sighed Lady Grace, again.

"Who knows, dear? They are always passing something or other they're sorry for afterwards in either House. Shall I tell you who'd know all about it?—that Mr. Davenport Dunn. He is just the kind of person to understand these things."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Lady Grace, with more animation in her manner.

"Let us ask him to dinner," said Lady Lackington; "I know him sufficiently to do so—that is, I have met him once. He'll be charmed, of course; and if there is anything very good and very safe to be done on the Bourse, he'll certainly tell us."

"I don't care for the Bourse. Indeed, I have nothing to speculate with."

"That is the best reason in the world, my dear, to make a

venture; at least, so my brother-in-law, Annesley, says. You are certain to come out a winner; and in my own brief experiences, I never gave anything—I only said, 'Yes, I'll have the shares.' They were at fifty-eight and three-quarters, they said, and sure to be at sixty-four or five; and they actually did rise to seventy, and then we sold—that is, Dunn did—and remitted me twelve hundred and fifty-three pounds odd."

"I wish he could be equally fortunate with me. I don't mean as regards money," said Lady Grace; and her cheek became crimson as she spoke.

"I have always said there's a rate in these things; and who knows if his being here just at this moment is not a piece of destiny."

"It might be so," said the other, sadly.

"There," said Lady Lackington, as she rapidly wrote a few lines on a piece of note paper, "that ought to do :

"DEAR MR. DUNN,—If you will accept of an early dinner, with Lady Grace Twining and myself for the company, to-day, you will much oblige

"Yours truly,

"GEORGINA LACKINGTON."

To another kind of man I'd have said something about two 'pauvres femmes délaissées,' but he'd have been frightened, and probably not come."

"Probably," said Lady Grace, with a sigh.

"Now, let us try the success of this." And she rang a bell, and despatched the note.

Lady Lackington had scarcely time to deliver a short essay on the class and order of men to which Mr. Davenport Dunn pertained, when the servant returned with the answer. It was a very formal acceptance of the invitation: "Mr. Davenport Dunn presented his compliments,"—and so on.

"Of course, he comes," said she, throwing the note away. "Do you know, my dear, I half suspect we have been indiscreet; for now that we have caught our elephant, what shall we do with him?"

"I cannot give you one solitary suggestion."

"These people are not our people, nor are their gods our gods," said Lady Lackington.

"If we all offer up worship at the same temple, the Bourse," said Lady Grace, something sadly, "we can scarcely dispute about a creed."

"That is only true in a certain sense," replied the other. "Money is a necessity to all—the means of obtaining it may, therefore, be common to many. It is in the employment of wealth, in the tasteful expenditure of riches, that we distinguish ourselves from these people. You have only to see the houses they keep, their plate, their liveries, their equipages, and you perceive at once that whenever they rise above some grovelling imitation they commit the most absurd blunders against all taste and propriety. I wish we had Spicer here to see about this dinner, it is one of the very few things he understands: but I suppose we must leave it to the cook himself, and we have the comfort of knowing that the criticism on his efforts will not be of a very high order."

"We dine at four, I believe," said Lady Grace, in her habitual tone of sorrow, as she swept from the room with that gesture of profound woe that would have graced a queen in tragedy.

Let us turn for a moment to Mr. Davenport Dunn. Lady Lackington's invitation had not produced in him either those overwhelming sensations of astonishment, or those excessive emotions of delight, which she had so sanguinely calculated on. There was a time that a viscountess asking him thus to dinner had been an event, the very fact being one requiring some effort on his part to believe; but these days were long past. Mr. Dunn had not only dined with great people since that, but had himself been their host and entertainer. Noble lords and baronets had sipped his claret, right honourables praised his sherry, and high dignitaries condescended to inquire where he got "that exquisite port." The tremulous, faint-hearted, doubting spirit—the suspicious, self-distrusting, humble man, had gone, and in his place there was a bold, resolute nature, confident and able, daily testing his strength against some other in the ring, and as often issuing from the contest, satisfied that he had little to fear from any antagonist. He was clever enough to see that the great objects in life are accomplished less by dexterity and address than by a strong, undeviating purpose. The failure of many a gifted man, and the high success of many a common-place one, had not been without its lesson for him; and it was in the firm resolve to rise a winner that he sat down to the game of life.

Lady Lackington's invitation was, therefore, neither a cause of pleasure nor astonishment. He remembered having met her somewhere, some time, and he approached the renewed acquaintance without any one of the sentiments her Ladyship had so confidently predicted. Indeed, so little of that flurry of anticipa-

tion did he experience, that he had to be reminded her Ladyship was waiting dinner for him, before he could remember the pleasure that was before him.

It may be a very ungallant confession for this true history to make, but we cannot blink saying that Lady Lackington and Lady Grace both evidenced by their toilette that they were not indifferent to the impression they were to produce upon their guests.

The Viscountess was dressed in the perfection of that French taste whose chief characteristic is freshness and elegance. She was light, gauzy, and floating—a sweeping something of Valenciennes and white muslin—but yet human withal, and very graceful. Her friend, in deep black, with a rich lace veil fastened on her head behind, and draped artistically over one shoulder, was a charming personification of affliction not beyond consolation. When they met, it was with an exchange of looks that said, "This ought to do."

Lady Lackington debated with herself what precise manner of reception she would award to Mr. Dunn—whether to impose by the haughty condescension of a fine lady, or fascinate by the graceful charm of an agreeable one. She was "equal to either fortune," and could calculate on success, whichever road she adopted. While she thus hesitated, he entered.

If his approach had little or nothing of the man of fashion about it, it was still a manner wherein there was little to criticise. It was not bold nor timid, and, without anything like over confidence, there was yet an air of self-reliance that was not without dignity.

At dinner the conversation ranged over the usual topics of foreign travel, foreign habits, collections, and galleries. Of pictures and statues he had seen much, and evidently with profit and advantage; of people and society he knew next to nothing, and her Ladyship quickly detected this deficiency, and fell back upon it as her stronghold.

"When hard-worked men like myself take a holiday," said Dunn, "they are but too glad to escape from the realities of life by taking refuge amongst works of art. The painter and the sculptor suggest as much poetry as can consist with their stern notions, and are always real enough to satisfy the demand for fact."

"But would not what you call your holiday be more pleasantly passed in making acquaintances? You could of course, have easy access to the most distinguished society."

"I'm a bad Frenchman, my Lady, and speak not a word of German or Italian."

"English is very generally cultivated just now—the persons best worth talking to can speak it."

"The restraint of a strange tongue, like the novelty of a court dress, is a sad detractor from all naturalness. At least, in my own little experience with strangers, I have failed to read anything of a man's character when he addressed me in a language not his own."

"And was it essential you should have read it?" asked Lady Grace, languidly.

"I am always more at my ease when I know the geography of the land I live in," said Dunn, smiling.

"I should say you have great gifts in that way—I mean in deciphering character," said Lady Lackington.

"Your Ladyship flatters me. I have no pretensions of the kind. Once satisfied of the sincerity of those with whom I come into contact, I never strive to know more, nor have I the faculties to attempt more."

"But, in your wide-spread intercourse with life, do you not, insensibly as it were, become an adept in reading men's natures?"

"I don't think so, my Lady. The more one sees of life, the simpler does it seem, not from any study of humanity, but by the easy fact that three or four motives sway the whole world. An unsupplied want of one kind or other—wealth, rank, distinction, affection, it may be—gives the entire impulse to a character, just as a passion imparts the expression to a face; and all the diversities of temperament, like those of countenance, are nothing but the impress of a want—you may call it a wish. Now it may be," added he, and as he spoke he stole a glance, quick as lightning, at Lady Grace, "that such experiences are more common to men like myself—men, I mean, who are entrusted with the charge of others' interests; but assuredly I have no clue to character save in that one feature—a want."

"But I want fifty thousand things," said Lady Lackington. "I want a deal of money; I want that beautiful villa near Palermo, the 'Serra Novena'; I want that Arab pony Kratuloff rides in the park; I want, in short, everything that pleases me every hour of the day."

"These are not wants that make impulses, no more than a passing shower makes a climate," said Dunn. "What I speak of is that unceasing, unwearied desire that is with us in joy or sadness, that journeys with us and lives with us, mingling

in every action, blending with every thought, and presenting to our minds a constant picture of ourselves under some wished-for aspect different from all we have ever known, where we are surrounded with other impulses and swayed by other passions, and yet still identically ourselves. Lady Grace apprehends me."

"Perhaps—at least partly," said she, fanning herself and concealing her face.

"There are very few exempt from a temptation of this sort, or if they be, it is because their minds are dissipated on various objects."

"I hate things to be called temptations, and snares, and the rest of it," said Lady Lackington; "it is a very tiresome cant. You may tell me, while I am waiting for my fish-sauce at dinner, it is a temptation, but if you wish me really to understand the word, tell me of some wonderful speculation, some marvellous scheme for securing millions. Oh! dear Mr. Dunn, you who really know the way, will you just show me the road to—I will be moderate—about twenty thousand pounds?"

"Nothing easier, my Lady, if you are disposed to risk forty."

"But I am not, sir. I have not the slightest intention to risk one hundred. I'm not a gambler."

"And yet what your Ladyship points at is very like gambling."

"Pray place that word along with temptation, in the forbidden category; it is quite hateful to me."

"Have *you* the same dislike to chance, Lady Grace," said he, stealing a look at her face with some earnestness.

"No," said she, in a low voice, "it is all I have to look for."

"By the way, Mr. Dunn, what are they doing in Parliament about us? Is there not something contemplated by which we can insist upon separate maintenance, or having a suitable settlement, or——"

"Separation—divorce," said Lady Grace, solemnly.

"No, my Lady, the law is only repairing an old road, not making a new one. The want of the age is cheapness, cheap literature, cheap postage, and cheap travelling, and why not cheap divorce? Legislation now professes as its great aim to extend to the poor all the comforts of the rich, and as this is supposed to be one of them——"

"Have you any reason to doubt it, sir?" asked Lady Grace.

"Luxuries cease to be luxuries when they become common.

Cheap divorce will be as unfashionable as cheap pine-apple when a coal-heaver can have it," said Lady Lackington.

"You mistake, it seems to me, what constitutes the luxury," interposed Lady Grace. "Every day of the year sees men liberated from prison, yet no one will pretend that the sense of freedom is less dear to every creature thus delivered."

"Your figure is but too like," said Dunn. "The divorced wife will be to the world only too much a resemblance of the liberated prisoner. Dark or fair, guilty or innocent, she will carry with her the opprobrium of a public trial, a discussion, and a verdict. Now, how few of us would go through an operation in public for the cure of a malady. Would we not rather hug our sorrows and our sufferings in secrecy, than accept health on such conditions?"

"Not when the disease was consuming your very vitals—not when a perpetual fever racked your brain and boiled in your blood. You'd take little heed of what is called exposure then. The cry of your heart would be, 'Save me! save me!'" As she spoke, her voice grew louder and wilder, till it became almost a shriek, and, as she ended, she lay back flushed and panting in her chair.

"You have made her quite nervous, Mr. Dunn," said Lady Lackington, as she arose and fanned her.

"Oh! no. It's nothing. Just let me have a little fresh air—on the terrace. Will you give me your arm?" said Lady Grace, faintly. And Dunn assisted her as she arose and walked out. "How very delicious this is!" said she, as she leaned over the balcony, and gazed down upon the placid water, streaked with long lines of starlight. "I conclude," said she, after a little pause, "that scenes like this—moments as peacefully tranquil—are as dear to you, hard-worked men of the world, as they are to the wearied hearts of us poor women, all whose ambitions are so humble in comparison."

"We are all of us striving for the same goal, I believe," said he, "this same search after happiness, the source of so much misery!"

"You are not married, I believe?" said she, in an accent whose very softness had a tone of friendship.

"No. I am as much alone in the world as one well can be," rejoined he, sorrowfully.

"And have you gone through life without ever meeting one with whom you would have been content to make partnership—taking her, as those solemn words say, 'for better, for worse?'"

"They are solemn words," said he, evading her question; "for they pledge that for which it is so hard to promise—the changeful moods which time and years bring over us. Which of us at twenty can say what he will be at thirty—still less at fifty? The world makes us many things we never meant to be."

"So, then, you are not happy?" said she, in the same low voice.

"I have not said so much," said he, smiling sadly; "are you?"

"Can you ask me? Is not the very confidence wherewith I treat you—strangers as we were an hour back to each other—the best evidence that it is from the very depth of my misery I appeal to you?"

"Make no rash confidences, Lady Grace," said he, seriously. "They who tell of their heart's sorrows to the world are like those who count their gold before robbers. I have seen a great deal of life, and the best philosophy I have learned from it is to 'bear.' Bear everything that can be borne. You will be surprised what a load you will carry by mere practice of endurance."

"It is so easy to say to one in pain, 'Have patience,'" said she, bitterly.

"I have practised what I teach for many a year. Be assured of one thing—the Battle of Life is waged by all. The most favoured by fortune—the luckiest, as the world calls them—have their contest and their struggle. It is not for existence, but it is often for what makes existence valuable."

She sighed deeply, and, after a pause, he went on:

"We pity the poor, weary, heart-sick litigant, wearing out life in the dreary prosecution of a Chancery suit, dreaming at night of that fortune he is never to see, and waking every day to the same dull round of pursuit. As hope flickers in his heart, suffering grows a habit; his whole nature imbibes the conflicting character of his cause; he doubts, and hesitates, and hopes, and fears, and wishes, till his life is one long fever. But infinitely more painful is the struggle of the heart whose affections have been misplaced. These are the suits over which no hope ever throws a ray. It is a long, dreary path, without a halting-place or a goal."

As he spoke, she covered her face with her handkerchief; but he could perceive that she was weeping.

"I am speaking of what I know," said he. "I remember once coming closely into relations with a young nobleman whose station, fortune, and personal advantages combined to realise all

that one could fancy of worldly blessings. He was just one of those types a novelist would take to represent the most favoured class of the most favoured land of Europe. He had an ancient name, illustrious in various ways, a splendid fortune, was singularly endowed with abilities, highly accomplished, and handsome, and, more than all, he was gifted with that mysterious power of fascination by which some men contrive to make themselves so appreciated by others that their influence is a sort of magic. Give him an incident to relate—let him have a passing event to tell, wherein some emotion of pity, some sentiment of devotion played a part—and, without the slightest touch of artifice, without the veriest shade of ingenuity, he could make you listen breathlessly, and hang in rapture on his words. Well, this man—of whom, if I suffer myself to speak, I shall grow wearisome in the praise—this man was heart-broken. Before he succeeded to his title, he was very poor, a subaltern in the army, with little beyond his pay. He fell in love with a very beautiful girl—I never heard her name, but I know that she was a daughter of one of the first houses in England. She returned his affection, and there was one of those thousand cases wherein love has to combat all the odds, and devotion subdue every thought that appeals to worldly pride and vanity.

“She accepted the contest nobly: she was satisfied to brave humble fortune, obscurity, exile—everything for him—at least, she said so, and I believe she thought she could keep her word. When the engagement took place—which was a secret to their families—the London season had just begun.

“It is not for me to tell you what a period of intoxicating pleasure and excitement that is, nor how in that wondrous conflict of wealth, splendour, beauty, and talent, all the fascination of gambling is imparted to a scene where, of necessity, gain and loss are alternating. It demands no common power of head and heart to resist these temptations. Apparently she had not this self-control. The gorgeous festivities about her, the splendour of wealth, and, more than even that, the esteem in which it was held, struck her forcibly. She saw that the virtues of humble station met no more recognition than the false lustre of mock gems—that ordinary gifts, illustrated by riches, became actual graces. She could not shut out the contrast between her lover, poor, unnoticed, and unregarded, and the crowd of fashionable and distinguished youths whose princely fortunes gave them place and pre-eminence. In fact, as he himself told me—for Allington excused her——Good Heavens! are

you ill?" cried he, as, with a low, faint cry, she sank to the ground.

"Is she dying? Good God! is she dead?" cried Lady Lackington, as she lifted the powerless arm, and held the cold hands within her own.

Lanfranchi was speedily sent for, and saw that it was merely a fainting fit.

"She was quite well previously, was she not?" asked he of Dunn.

"Perfectly so. We were chatting of indifferent matters—of London, and the season—when she was seized," said he. "Is there anything in the air here that disposes to these attacks?"

Lanfranchi looked at him without reply. Possibly they understood each other, ~~for~~ they parted without further colloquy.

CHAPTER XI.

"A CONSULTATION."

It was late in the night as Lord Lackington and his friends reached the villa, a good deal wearied, very jaded, and, if the confession may be made, a little sick of each other; they parted pretty much as the members of such day-long excursions are wont to do—not at all sorry to have reached home again, and brought their trip of pleasure to an end. Twining, of course, was the same happy-natured, gay, volatile creature that he set out in the morning. Everything went well with *him*; the world had but one aspect, which was a pleasant one, and he laughed and muttered, "What fun!" as in half-dogged silence the party wended their way through the garden towards the house.

"I hope these little girls may not have caught cold," said the Viscount, as he stood with Twining on the terrace, after saying "Good night!"

"I hope so, with all my heart. Charming girls—most fascinating—father so amiable."

"Isn't that Dunn's apartment we see the light in?" asked the other, half impatiently. "I'll go and make him a visit."

"Overjoyed to see you, greatly flattered by the attention," chimed in Twining; and while he rubbed his hands over the enchanting prospect, Lord Lackington walked away.

Not waiting for any announcement, and turning the handle of the door immediately after he had knocked at it, the Viscount entered. Whether Dunn had heard him or not, he never stirred from the table where he was writing, but continued engrossed by his occupation till his Lordship accosted him.

"I have come to disturb you, I fear, Dunn?"

"Oh! Lord Lackington, your most obedient. Too happy to be honoured by your presence at any time. Just returned, I conclude?"

"Yes, only this moment," said the Viscount, sighing weariedly.

"These pic-nics are stupid inventions, they fatigue and they exhaust. They give little pleasure at the time, and none whatever to look back upon."

"Your Lordship's picture is rather a dreary one," said Dunn, smiling.

"Perfectly correct, I assure you; I went simply to oblige some countryfolks of yours. The O'Reillys—nice little girls—very natural, very pretty creatures; but the thing is a bore. I never knew any one who enjoyed it except the gentleman who gets tipsy, and *he* has an awful retribution in the next day's headache—the terrible headache of iced rum punch."

Dunn laughed, because he saw that his Lordship expected as much, and the Viscount resumed:

"I am vexed, besides, at the loss of time; I wanted to have my morning with *you* here."

Dunn bowed graciously, but did not speak.

"We have so much to talk over—so many things to arrange—that I am quite provoked at having thrown away a day; and you, too, are possibly pressed for time?"

He nodded in assent.

"You can give me to-morrow, however?"

"I can give you to-night, my Lord, which will, perhaps, do as well."

"But to-morrow——"

"Oh, to-morrow, my Lord, I start with Baron Glumthal for Frankfort, to meet the Elector of Darmstadt,—an appointment that cannot be broken."

"Politically most important, I have no doubt," said the Viscount, with an undisguised sarcasm in the tone.

"No, my Lord, a mere financial affair," said Dunn, not heeding the other's manner. "His Highness wants a loan, and we are willing to accommodate him."

"I wish I could find you in the same liberal spirit. It is the very thing I stand in need of just now. In fact, Dunn, you must do it."

The half-coaxing accent of these last words was a strong contrast to the sneer of a few seconds before, and Dunn smiled as he heard them.

"I fancy, my Lord, that if you are still of the same mind as before, you will have little occasion to arrange for a loan in any quarter."

"Pooh! pooh! the scheme is absurd. It has not one, but fifty obstacles against it. In the first place, you know nothing

of this fellow, or whether he can be treated with. As for myself, I do not believe one word about his claim. Why, Sir, there's not a titled house in England has not at some period or other been assailed with this sort of menace. It is the stalest piece of knavery going. If you were to poll the peers to-morrow, you'd not meet two out of ten have not been served with notice of action, or ejectment on the title; in fact, Sir, these suits are a profession, and a very lucrative one, too."

Lord Lackington spoke warmly, and ere he had finished had lashed himself up into a passion. Meanwhile, Dunn sat patiently, like one who awaited the storm to pass by ere he advanced upon his road.

"I conclude, from your manner, that you do not agree with me?" said the Viscount.

"Your Lordship opines truly. I take a very different view of this transaction. I have had all the documents of Conway's claim before me. Far more competent judges have seen and pronounced upon them. They constitute a most formidable mass of evidence, and save in a very few and not very important details, present an unbroken chain of testimony."

"So, then, there is a battery preparing to open fire upon us?" said the Viscount, with a laugh of ill-affected indifference.

"There is a mine whose explosion depends entirely upon your Lordship's discretion. If I say, my Lord, that I never perused a stronger case, I will also say that I never heard of one so easy of management. The individual in whose favour these proofs exist has not the slightest knowledge of them. He has not a suspicion that all his worldly prospects put together are worth a ten-pound note. It is only within the last three months that I have succeeded in even discovering where he is."

"And where is he?"

"Serving as a soldier with his regiment in the Crimea. He was in hospital at Scutari when I first heard, but since that returned to duty with his regiment."

"What signifies all this? The fellow himself is nothing to us!"

Dunn again waited till this burst of anger had passed, and then resumed:

"My Lord, understand me well. You can deal with this case now; six months hence it may be clear and clean beyond all your power of interference. If Conway's claim derive, as I have strong ground to believe it, from the elder branch, the estate and the title are both his."

"You are a hardy fellow, a very hardy fellow, Mr. Dunn, to make such a speech as this!"

"I said, If, my Lord—If, is everything here. The assumption is, that Reginald Conway was summoned by mistake to the House of Peers in Henry the Seventh's reign—the true Baron Lackington being then an exile. It is from him this Conway's descent claims."

"I'm not going to constitute myself a Committee of Privileges, Sir, and listen to all this jargon; nor can I easily conceive that the unshaken possession of centuries is to be disturbed by the romantic pretensions of a Crimean soldier. I am also aware how men of your cloth conduct these affairs to their own especial advantage. They assume to be the arbiters of the destinies of great families, and they expect to be paid for their labours—eh, isn't it so?"

"I believe your Lordship has very accurately defined our position, though, perhaps, we might not quite agree as to the character of the remuneration."

"How so? What do you mean?"

"I, for instance, my Lord, would furnish no bill of costs to either party. My relations with your Lordship are such as naturally give me a very deep interest in what concerns you; of Mr. Conway I know nothing."

"So, then, you are simply moved in this present affair by a principle of pure benevolence; you are to be a sort of providence to the House of Lackington—eh, is that it?"

"Your Lordship's explanation is most gracious," said Dunn, bowing.

"Come, now; let us talk seriously," said the Viscount, in a changed tone. "What is it you propose?"

"What I would *suggest*, my Lord," said Dunn, with a marked emphasis on the word, "is this. Submit the documents of this claim—we can obtain copies of the most important of them—to competent opinion, learn if they be of the value I attribute to them, see, in fact, if this claim be prosecuted, whether it is likely to succeed at law, and, if so, anticipate the issue by a compromise."

"But what compromise?"

"Your Lordship has no heir. Your brother, who stands next in succession, need not marry. This point at once decided, Conway's claim can take its course after Mr. Beecher's demise. The estates secured to your Lordship for life will amply guarantee a loan to the extent you wish."

"But they are mine, Sir; they are mine this moment. I can go into the market to-morrow and raise what amount I please——"

"Take care, my Lord—take care; a single imprudent step might spoil all. If you were to negotiate a mere ten thousand to-morrow, you might be met by the announcement that your whole property was about to be litigated, and your title to it contested. Too late to talk of compromise then."

"This sounds very like a threat, Mr. Dunn."

"Then have I expressed myself most faultily, my Lord; nor was there anything less near my thoughts."

"Would you like to see my brother; he shall call on you in Dublin; you will be there by—when?"

"Wednesday week, my Lord; and it is a visit would give me much pleasure."

"If I were to tell you my mind frankly, Dunn," said the Viscount, in a more assured tone, "I'd say, I would not give a ten-pound note to buy up this man's whole claim. Annesley, however, has a right to be consulted—he has an interest only second to my own. See him, talk it over with him, and write to me."

"Where shall I address you, my Lord."

"Florence—I shall leave this at once—to-night," said Lord Lackington, impatiently; for somehow—we are not going to investigate wherefore—he was impatient to be off, and see no more of those he had been so intimate with.

CHAPTER XII.

ANNESLEY BEECHER'S "PAL."

LORD LACKINGTON was not much of a letter-writer; correspondence was not amongst the habits of his day. The society in which he moved, and of which, to some extent, he was a type, cared more for conversational than epistolary graces. They kept their good things for their dinner parties, and hoarded their smart remarks on life for occasions where the success was a personal triumph. Twice or thrice, however, every year, he was obliged to write. His man of business required to be reminded of this or that necessity for money, and his brother Annesley should also be admonished, or reproved, or remonstrated with, in that tone of superiority and influence so well befitting one who pays an annuity to him who is the recipient. In fact, around this one circumstance were grouped all the fraternal feelings and brotherly interest of these two men. One hundred and twenty-five pounds sterling every half year represented the ties of blood that united them; and while it offered to the donor the proud reflection of a generous self-sacrifice, it gave to him who received the almost as agreeable occasion for sarcastic allusion to the other's miserly habits and sordid nature, with a contrast of what he himself had done were their places in life reversed.

It was strange enough that the one same incident should have begotten such very opposite emotions, and yet the two phrases, "If you knew all I have done for him," and the rejoinder, "You'd not believe the beggarly pittance he allows me," were correct exponents of their several feelings.

Not impossible is it that each might have made out a good case against the other. Indeed, it was a theme whereon, in their several spheres, they were eloquent; and few admitted to the confidence of either had not heard of the utter impossibility

of doing anything for Annesley—his reckless folly, his profligacy, and his waste; and, on the other hand, “The incredible meanness of Lackington, with at least twelve thousand a year, and no children to provide for, giving me the salary of an upper butler.” Each said far too much in his own praise not to have felt at least strong misgivings in his conscience. Each knew far too well that the other had good reason in many things he said; but so long had their plausibilities been repeated, that each ended by satisfying himself he was a paragon of fraternal affection, and, stranger still, had obtained for this opinion a distinct credence in their several sets in society; so that every Peer praised the Viscount, and every hard-up younger son pitied poor Annesley, and condemned the “infamous conduct of the old coxcomb his brother.”

“That scampish fellow’s conduct is killing poor Lackington,” would say a noble lord.

“Annesley can’t stand old Lackington’s treatment much longer,” was the commentary of half-pay captains of dragoons.

Had you but listened to Lord Lackington he would have told you of at least fifty distinct schemes he had contrived for his brother’s worldly success, all marred and spoiled by that confounded recklessness, “that utter disregard, Sir, of the commonest rules of conduct that every man in life is bound to observe.” He might have been by this time Colonel of the Fifty-something; he might have been Governor of some fortunate island in the Pacific—Consul-General at Sunstroke Town, in Africa, where, after three years, you retire with a full pension. If he’d have gone into the Church—and there was no reason why he shouldn’t—there was the living of St. Cuthbert-in-the-Vale, eight hundred a year, ready for him. Every Administration for years back had been entreated in his favour; and from Ordinance clerkships to Commissions in Lunacy he had been offered places in abundance. *Sinecures* in India and jobs in Ireland had been found out in his behalf, and Deputy-somethings created in Bermuda just to provide for him. The concessions he had made, the proxies he had given, “just for Annesley’s sake,” formed a serious charge against the noble Lord’s political consistency; and he quoted them as the most stunning evidences of fraternal love, and pointed out where he had gone against his conscience and his party as to a kind of martyrdom that made a man illustrious for ever.

As for Annesley, his indictment had, to the full, as many counts. What he might have been—not in a mere worldly

sense—not as regards place, pension, or emolument—but what in integrity, what in fair fame, what in honourable conduct and unblemished character, if Lackington had only dealt fairly with him—"there was really no saying." The noble motives which might have prompted, the high aspirations that might have moved him, all the generous impulses of a splendid nature, were there, thwarted, baffled, and destroyed, by Lackington's confounded stupidity. What the Viscount ought to have done, what precise species of culture he should have devoted to these budding virtues, how he ought to have trained and trellised these tender shoots of aspiring goodness, he never exactly detailed. It was only clear that, whatever the road, he had never taken it; and it was really heartbreaking to hear what the world had lost in public and private virtues, all for Lackington's indolence and folly.

"He never gave me a chance, Sir—not one chance," would he say. "Why, he knows Palmerston just as well as I know you; he can talk to Lord Derby as freely as I am speaking at this minute; and, would you believe it? he wouldn't say, 'There's Annesley—my brother Annesley—wants that commissionership, or that secretary's place. Annesley's a devilish clever fellow—up to a thing or two—ask Grog Davis if he ain't. Just try to get between him and the ropes, that's all; see if he doesn't sleep with one eye open.' Do you tell me there's one of them would refuse him? Grog said to his face, at Epsom Downs, the morning Crocus was scratched, 'My Lord,' says he, 'take all you can get upon Annesley—make your book on him; he's the best horse in your lot, and it's Grog Davis says it.'"

Very true was it that Grog Davis said so. Nay, to enjoy the pleasure of hearing him so discourse was about the greatest gratification of Annesley Beecher's present life. He was poor and discredited. The Turf Club would not have him—he durst not show at Tattersall's. Few would dine, none discount him; and yet that one man's estimate of his gifts sustained him through all. "If Grog be right—and he ought to be, seeing that a more dodgy, crafty fellow never lived—I shall come all round again. He that never backed the wrong horse couldn't be far astray about men. He thinks I've running in me yet; he sees that I'll come out one of these days in top condition, and show my number from the Stand-house." To have had the greatest opinion in Equity favourable to your cause in Chancery—to have known that Thesiger or Kelly said your case was safe—to learn that Faraday had pronounced your analysis correct—

or White, of Cowes, had approved of the lines of your new yacht—would any of them be very reassuring sensations; and yet were they as nothing to the unbounded confidence imparted to Beecher's mind by the encouraging opinion of his friend Grog Davis. It is only justice to say that Beecher's estimate of Davis was a feeling totally free of all the base alloy of any self-interest. With all Grog's great abilities—with talents of the very highest order—he was the reverse of a successful man. Trainer, auctioneer, sporting character, pugilist, publican, and hell-keeper, he had been always unlucky. He had his share of good things—more than his share. He had been in at some of the "very best robberies" ever done at Newmarket. The horses he had "nobbled," the jockeys "squared," the owners "hocussed," were legion. All the matches he had "made safe," all the fights he had sold, would have filled five columns of *Bell's Life*. In whatever called itself "sport" he had dabbled and cheated for years; and yet, there he was, with all his successes and all his experiences, something more than fifteen thousand pounds worse than ruined.

Worthy reader, have you stood by while some enthusiastic admirer of Turner's later works has, in all the fervour of his zeal, encomiumised one of those strange, incomprehensible creations, where cloud and sea, atmosphere, shadow, and smoke, seem madly commingled with tall masts piercing the lurid vapour, and storm-clouds drifting across ruined towers? If at first you gladly welcomed any guidance through the wondrous labyrinth, and you accepted gratefully the aid of one who could reconcile seeming incongruities, and explain apparent difficulties, what was your disappointment at last to discover that, from some defect of organisation, some absent power of judgment, you could not follow the elucidation—that you saw no power in this, no poetry in that—that no light gleamed into *your* soul out of all that darkness, nor any hope into *your* heart, from the mad confusion of that chaos? Pretty much the same mystification had it been to you to have listened to Annesley Beecher's account of his friend Grog Davis. It was evident that *he* saw the reason for everything—he could account for all; but, alas! the explanatory gift was denied him. The very utmost you could attain to was a glimmering perception that there were several young men of rank and station who had only half trusted the distinguished Davis, and in their sparing confidence had rescued themselves from his knavery; that very artful combinations occasionally require confederates, and confederates are

not always loyal; that Grog occasionally did things with too high a hand—in plain words, reserved for himself more than his share of the booty; and, in fact, that, with the best intentions and the most decided determination to put others “into the hole,” he fell in himself, and so completely, too, that he had never been able to show his head out of it ever since.

If, therefore, as we have said, Annesley Beecher's explanation of these tangled skeins was none of the clearest, there was nothing daunting to himself in that difficulty. On the contrary, he deemed his intimacy with Grog as one of his greatest privileges. Grog had told him things that he would not tell to another man breathing; he had seen in Grog's own hand what would, if not hang him, give him twenty years at Norfolk Island; he knew that Grog had done things no man in England but himself had ever dreamed of; in fact, as Othello's perils had won the fair Desdemona's love, Grog Davis's rascalities had captivated Beecher's admiration; and, as the recruit might gaze upon the thickly-studded crosses on the breast of some glorious soldier, so did he venerate the proofs of the thousand-and-one knaveries of one who for thirty-odd years had been a “leg” and a swindler.

Let us present Captain Davis—for by that title was he popularly known—to our reader. He was a short, red-faced—very red-faced—man, with a profusion of orange-red hair, while he wore beard and whiskers in that form so common in our Crimean experiences. He was long-armed and bandy, the legs being singularly short and muscular. He affected dress, and was remarkable for more ostentation of velvet than consisted with ordinary taste, and a far greater display of rings, charms, and watch trinkets than is common even to gentlemen of the “Jewish persuasion.” The expression of the man's face was eminently determination, and his greenish-grey eyes and thin-lipped, compressed mouth plainly declared, “Bet with me or not—if you give me the shadow of a shade of impertinence I'll fasten a quarrel upon you of which all your rank and station won't protect you from the consequences. I can hit a sixpence at twenty paces, and I'll make you feel that fact in every word you say to me. In my brevet rank of the Turf you can't disown me, and if you try, mine the fault if you succeed.” He had been out three or four times in very sanguinary affairs, so that the question as to “meeting” him was a settled point. He was one of those men to whom the epithet dangerous completely applies; he was dangerous alike to the young fellow entering life, unsuspectful

of its wiles and ignorant of its rascalities; dangerous in the easy facility with which he would make foolish wagers, and lend even large sums on the very slightest acquaintance. He seemed so impressed with his theory that everybody ought to have all the enjoyment he liked, there was such a careless good-nature about him, such an uncalculating generosity, an air of such general kindliness, that very young men felt at once at ease in his company; and if there were sundry things in his manner that indicated coarseness or bad breeding, if his address was vulgar and his style "snobbish," there were sufficient traits of originality about him to form a set-off for these defects, and "Old Grog" was pronounced an "out-and-out good fellow," and always ready "to help one at a pinch."

Such was he to the very young men just passing the threshold of life; to the older hands—fellows versed in all its acts and ways—he showed no false colours; such then, he was, the character which no disguise conceals, "the Leg;" one whose solvency may be counted on more safely than his honesty, and whose dealings, however based on roguery, are still guided by that amount of honour which is requisite for transactions amongst thieves. There was an impression, too—we have no warranty for saying how far it was well-founded—that Grog was behind the scenes in transactions where many high and titled characters figured; that he was confederate in affairs of more than doubtful integrity; and that, if he liked, he could make revelations such as all the dark days at Tattersall's never equalled. "They'll never push *me* to the wall," he would say, "take my word for it; they'll not make Grog Davis turn Queen's evidence," was the boastful exclamation of his after-dinner hours: and he was right. He could have told of strange doings with arsenic in the stable, and stranger still with hocussed negus in the back parlour; he had seen the certain favourite for the Oaks carted out stiff and cold on the morning that was to have witnessed her triumph; and he had opened the door for the ruined heir as he left his last thousand on the green baize of the hell table. He was so accustomed to all the vicissitudes of fortune—that is, he was so habituated to aid the goddess in the work of destiny—that nothing surprised him; and his red, carbuncled face and jaundiced eye, never betrayed the slightest evidence of anything like emotion or astonishment.

How could Beecher have felt any other than veneration for one so gifted? He approached him as might some youthful artist the threshold of Michael Angelo; he felt, when with him,

that he was in the presence of one whose maxims were silver and whose precepts were gold, and that to the man who could carry away those experiences the secrets of life were no longer mysteries.

All the delight an old campaigner might have felt had the Great Duke vouchsafed to tell him of his achievements in the Peninsula—how he had planned the masterly defences of Torres Vedras, or conceived the bold advance upon Spain—would have been but a weak representation of the eager enjoyment Beecher experienced when Grog narrated some of his personal recollections: how he had squared Sir Toby at Manchester; the way he had won the York Handicap with a dead horse; and the still prouder day when, by altering the flags at Bolton, he gained twenty-two thousand pounds on the Great National Steeple-chase. Nor was it without a certain vain-gloriousness that Grog would speak of these, as, cigar in mouth and his hands deep in his breeches-pockets, he grunted out in broken sentences the great triumphs of his life.

We began this chapter by saying that Lord Lackington was not an impassioned letter-writer; and here we are discoursing about Mr. Davis and his habits, as if these topics could possibly have any relation to the noble Viscount's ways; and yet they are connected, for it was precisely to read one of his Lordship's letters to his friend that Beecher was now Grog's guest, seated opposite to him at the fire, in a very humble room of a very humble cottage on the strand of Irish-town. Grog had sought this retirement after the last settling at Newmarket, and had been, in popular phrase, "missing" since that event.

"Well, it's a long one, at all events," said Mr. Davis, as he glanced through his double eye-glass at the letter Beecher handed him—"so long, that I'll be sworn it had no enclosure. When a man sends the flimsy, he spares you the flourish!"

"Right there, Grog. It's all preach and no pay; but read it." And he lighted his cigar, and puffed away.

"'Lake of Como, Oct. 15.'

"What's the old cove about up at Como so late in the season?"

"Read it, and you'll know all," said the other, sententiously.

"DEAR ANNESLEY,—I have been plotting a letter to you these half-dozen weeks, but what with engagements, the heat, and

that insurmountable desire to defer whatever can by possibility be put off, all my good intentions have turned out tolerably like some of your own—pleasant memories, and nothing more. Georgiana, too, said——

“Who’s Georgiana?”

“My sister-in-law.”

“What’s she like—you never spoke of her?”

“Oh, nothing particular. She was a Ludworth; they’re a proud set, but haven’t a brass farthing among them.”

“Why did he marry her?”

“Who knows? He liked her, I believe,” said he, after a pause, as though, failing a good and valid reason, he gave the next best that offered.

“Georgiana, too, said she’d write, but the chances are her own commissions would have been the burden of her letter. She has never forgotten that bargain of Mechlin lace you once procured her, and always speculates on some future exercise of your skill.”

Annesley burst into a hearty laugh, and said,

“It was amongst the trumpery they gave me at Antwerp for a bill of three hundred and fifty pounds; I got a Rubens—a real Rubens, of course—an ebony cabinet, and twenty yards of coffee-coloured ‘point de Bruxelles,’ horrid trash; but no matter, I never paid the bill, and Georgiana thought the lace a dead bargain at forty louis.”

“So that it squared you both?” said Grog.

“Just so, Master Davis. Read on.”

“‘You must see the utter impossibility of my making any increase to your present allowance——’”

“Hang me if I do, then!”

“—present allowance. The pressure of so many bad years, the charges of aiding the people to emigrate, and the cost of this confounded war, have borne very heavily upon us all, and condemned us to economies that we never dreamt of. For myself, I have withdrawn my subscription from several charities, and will neither give a cup at the Broome Regatta, nor my accustomed ten pounds towards the race ball. I wish I could impress you with the necessity of similar sacrifices: these are times when every man must take his share of the national burdens, and reduce his habits of indulgence in conformity with national exigency.”

“It’s all very fine to talk of cutting your coat, but when you haven’t got any cloth at all, Master Davis——”

"Well, I suppose you must take a little of your neighbour's—if it don't suit you to go naked. This here noble Lord writes 'like a book;' but when he says 'I'm not a-going to stump it,' there's no more to be said. You don't want to see the horse take his gallops that you know is to be scratched on the day of the race—that's a mere piece of idle curiosity, ain't it?"

"Quite true, Grog."

"Well, it's clear he won't. He says he won't, and that's enough.—'We have come abroad for no other reason than economy, and are only looking for a place inexpensive enough for our reduced means.' What's his income?"

"Better than twelve thousand a year."

"Has he debts?"

"Well, I suppose he may—everybody has."

"Ay," said Grog, dryly, and read on.—"'The Continent, however, is not the cheap place it once was—rent, servants, markets, all are dearer—and I'm quite satisfied you find Ireland much less expensive than any other part of Europe'—which means, 'Stay there'—eh?"

"No, I don't take it that way," said Beecher, reddening.

"But I do, and I'll maintain it," reiterated Grog. "He's a knowing one, that same noble Viscount—he's not the flat you always thought he was. He can square his own book, he can.—'As to any prospect of places, I tell you frankly, there is none. These competitive humbugs they call examinations do certainly stop a number of importunate people, but the vigilance of Parliament exercises a most overbearing tyranny on the ministers; and then the press! Now, we might tide over the House, Annesley, but the press would surely ruin all. If you were gazetted to-day Consul to the least-known South American republic—commissioner for the sale of estates in the planet Saturn—those fellows would have a leader on you to-morrow, showing what you did fifteen years ago at Ascot—all your outlawries—all your actions in bankruptcy. They'd begin saying, 'Is this the notorious Hon. Annesley Beecher? or are we mistaken in supposing that the gentleman here referred to is the same lately mentioned in our columns as the friend and associate of the still more famous Grog Davis?'"

"He's cool, he is, the noble Lord," said Davis, laying down the letter, while Beecher laughed till his eyes ran over with tears. "Now, I'd trouble his Lordship to tell *me*," continued Grog, "which had the worst of that same acquaintance, and which was more profitable to the other. If the famous Grog

were to split upon the notorious Annesley, who'd come last out of the bag?"

"You needn't take it so seriously as all that, Grog," said Beecher, in a placable tone.

"Why, when I'm told that one of the hardest things to be laid to *your* charge is the knowing *me*, it's high time to be serious, I think—not but I might just throw a shell into the enemy's own camp. The noble Lord ain't so safe as he fancies. I was head-waiter at Smykes's—the old Cherry-tree, at Richmond—the night Mat Fortescue was ruined. I could tell the names of the partners even yet, though it's a matter of I won't say how many years ago; and when poor Fortescue blew his brains out, I know the man who drove his phaeton into town and said,— 'Fortescue never had a hand light enough for these chesnuts. I always knew what I could do with them if they were my own.'"

"Lackington never said that. I'll take my oath of it he never did!" cried Beecher, passionately.

"Take your oath of it!" said Davis, with an insulting sneer. "Do you mind the day old Justice Blanchard—it was at the York Assizes—said, 'Have a care, Mr. Beecher, what you are about to swear: if you persist in affirming that document, the consequences may be more serious than you apprehend?' And do you remember you didn't swear?"

"I'll tell you what, Master Grog," said Beecher, over whose face a sudden paleness now spread, "you may speak of *me* just as you like. You and I have been companions and pals for many a day; but Lackington is the head of my family, he has his seat in the Peers, he can hold up his head with the best in England, and I'll not sit here to listen to anything against him."

"You won't, won't you?" said Grog, placing a hand on either knee, and fixing his fiery grey eyes on the other's face. "Well, then, I'll tell you that you *shall*! Sit down, Sir—sit down, I say, and don't budge from that chair till I tell you! Do you see that hand? and that arm—grasp it, squeeze it—doesn't feel very like the sinews of a fellow that feared hard labour. I was the best ten stone seven man in England the year I fought Black Joe, and I'm as tough this minute, so that Norfolk Island needn't frighten me; but the Hon. Annesley Beecher wouldn't like it, I'll promise him. He'd have precious pains in the shoulder-blades, and very sore feelings about the small of the back, after the first day's stone-breaking. Now, don't provoke me, that's all. When the world has gone so bad with a man as

it has with *me* the last year or two, it's not safe to provoke him—it is not."

"I never meant to anger you, old fellow," began Annesley.

"Don't do it, then—don't, I say," repeated the other, doggedly; and he resumed the letter, saying: "When you're a-writing the answer to this here letter, just ask Grog Davis to give you a paragraph. Just say, 'Grog, old fellow, I'm writing to my noble brother; mayhap you have a message of some kind or other for him,' and you'll see whether he has or not."

"You're a rum one, Master Davis," said Beecher, with a laugh that revealed very little of a heart at ease.

"I'm one that won't stand a fellow that doesn't run straight with me—that's what I am. And now for the noble Viscount." And he ran his eyes over the letter without reading aloud. "All this here is only saying what sums he has paid for you, what terrible embarrassment your debts have caused him. Lord love him! it's no new thing to hear of in this life that paying money is no pleasure. And then it finishes, as all the stories usually do, by his swearing he won't do it any more. 'I think,' he says, 'you might come round by a fortunate hit in marriage; but somehow you blundered in every case that I pointed out to you——'"

"That's too bad!" cried Beecher, angrily. "The only thing he ever 'put me on' was an iron-master's widow at Barnstable, and I found that the whole concern was under a contract to furnish rails for a Peruvian line at two pounds ten a ton under the market price of iron."

"It was *I* discovered that!" broke in Grog, proudly.

"So it was, old fellow; and you got me off the match without paying forfeit."

"Well, this here looks better," continued Grog, reading. "Young and handsome, one of two daughters of an old Irish provision merchant come abroad for the first time in their life, and consequently new to everything. The name's O'Reilly, of Mary's Abbey, so that you can have no difficulty in accurately learning all about him in Dublin. Knowing that these things are snapped up immediately in the cities, I have induced O'R. to take a villa on the lake here for the present, so that if your inquiries turn out satisfactorily, you can come out at once, and we'll find the birds where I have landed them."

"That's business-like—that's well and sensibly put," said Davis, in a voice of no counterfeited admiration.

He read on; "'O'R. talks of forty thousand to each, but, with

the prospect of connecting himself with people of station, might possibly come down more handsomely in one case, particularly when brought to see that the other girl's prospects will be proportionately bettered by this alliance; at all events, no time is to be lost in the matter, and you can draw on me, at two months, for fifty pounds, which will carry you out here, and where, if you should not find me, you will have letters of presentation to the O'R.'s. It is not a case requiring either time or money—though it may call for more energy and determination than you are in the habit of exercising. At the proper moment I shall be ready to contribute all in my power.'

"What does that mean?" said Davis.

"I can't even guess; but no matter, the thing sounds well. You can surely learn all about this O'Reilly?"

"That's easy enough."

"I say, I say, old fellow," cried Beecher, as he flung his cigar away and walked up and down the room briskly, "this would put us all on our legs again. Wouldn't I 'go a heavy pot' on Rolt's stable! I'd take Coulton's three-year-old for the Canterbury to-morrow, I would! and give them twelve to twenty in hundreds on the double event. We'd serve them out, Master Grog—we'd give them such a shower-bath, old boy! They say I'm a flat, but what will they say when A. B.'s number hangs out at the Stand-house?"

"There's not much to do on the turf just now," said Grog, dryly. "They've spoiled the turf," said he, as he lighted his cigar—"clean spoiled it. Once upon a time the gents was gents, and the legs, legs, but now-a-days every one 'legs' it, as he can; so I'd like to see who's to make a livin' out of it!"

"There's truth in that!" chimed in Beecher.

"So that," resumed Grog, "if you go in for this girl, don't you be making a book; there's plenty better things to be had now than the ring. There's companies, and banks, and speculations on every hand. You buy in at, say thirty, and sell out at eighty, ninety, or a hundred. I've been a meditating over a new one I'll tell you about another time—let us first think about this here marriage, it ain't impossible."

"Impossible! I should think not, Master Grog. But you will please to remember that Lackington has no child. I must succeed to the whole thing—title and all."

"Good news for the Jews, wouldn't it be?" cried Davis. "Why, your outlying paper wouldn't leave much of a margin to

live on. You owe upwards of a hundred thousand—that you do."

"I could buy the whole concern to-morrow for five-and-twenty thousand pounds. They can't touch the entail, old fellow!"

"My word on't, they'd have it out of you, one way or other; but never mind, there's time enough to think of these things—just stir yourself about this marriage."

"I'll start on Monday. I have one or two trifling matters to look after here, and then I'm free."

"What's this in the turn-down of Lackington's letter, marked '*Strictly confidential*'?"

"I meant to have despatched this yesterday, but fortunately deferred doing so—fortunately, I say—as Davenport Dunn has just arrived here, with a very important communication, in which your interest is only inferior to my own. The explanation would be too long for a letter, and is not necessary besides, as D. will be in Dublin a day or two after this reaches you. See him at once; his address is Merrion-square North, and he will be fully prepared for your visit. Be on your guard. In truth, D., who is my own solicitor and man of business in Ireland, is somewhat of a crafty nature, and may have other interests in his head paramount to those of, yours,

" 'LACKINGTON.' "

"Can you guess what this means, Grog? has it any reference to the marriage scheme?"

"No; this is another match altogether," said Grog, sententially; "and this here Dunn—I know about him though I never seen him—is the swellest cove going. You ain't fit to deal with *him*—you ain't!" added he, contemptuously. "If you go and talk to that fellow alone, I know how 'twill be."

"Come, come, I'm no flat."

Grog's look—one of intense derision—stopped him, and after stammering and blushing deeply, he was silent.

"You think, because you have a turn of speed among cripples, that you're fast," said Grog, with one of his least amiable grins, "but I tell you, that except among things of your own breeding, you'd never save a distance. Lord love ye! it never makes a fellow sharp to be 'done;' that's one of the greatest mistakes people ever make. It makes him suspicious—it keeps him on the look-out, as the sailors say; but what's the use of being on the look-out if you haven't got good eyes? It's the go-ahead

makes a man now-a-days, and the cautious chaps have none of that. No, no; don't you go rashly and trust yourself alone with Dunn. You'll have to consider well over this—you'll have to turn it over carefully in your mind. I'd not wonder," said he, after a pause, "but you'll have to take me with you!"

CHAPTER XIII.

A MESSAGE FROM JACK.

"He's come at last, Bella," said Kellett, as, tired and weary, he entered the little cottage one night after dark. "I waited till I saw him come out of the station at Westland-row, and drive off to his house."

"Did he see you, papa?—did he speak to you?" asked she, eagerly.

"See *me*—speak to *me*! It's little he was thinking of *me*, darling! with Lord Glengariff shaking one of his hands, and Sir Samuel Downie squeezing the other, and a dozen more crying out, 'Welcome home, Mr. Dunn! it is happy we are to see you looking so well; we were afraid you were forgetting poor Ireland and not coming back to us!' And by that time the carmen took up the chorus, and began cheering and hurraing, 'Long life and more power to Davenport Dunn!' I give you my word, you'd have thought it was Daniel O'Connell, or at least a new Lord-Lieutenant, if you saw the uproar and excitement there was about him."

"And he—how did he take it?" asked she.

"Just as cool as if he had a born right to it all. 'Thank you very much—most kind of you,' he muttered, with a little smile and a wave of his hand, as much as to say, 'There now, that'll do. Don't you see that I'm travelling *incog.*, and don't want any more homage?'"

"Oh, no, papa—not that—it was rather like humility——"

"Humility!" said he, bursting into a bitter laugh—"you know the man well! Humility! there are not ten noblemen in Ireland this minute has the pride and impudence of that man. If you saw the way he walked down the steps to his carriage—giving a little nod here, and a little smile there—maybe offering two fingers to some one of rank in the crowd—you'd say,

‘There’s a Prince coming home to his own country—see how, in all their joy, he won’t let them be too familiar with him!’”

“Are you quite just—quite fair in all this, dearest papa?”

“Well, I suppose I’m not,” said he, testily. “It’s more likely the fault lies in myself—a poor, broken-down country gentleman, looking at everything on the dark side, thinking of the time when his own family were something in the land, and Mr. Davenport Dunn very lucky if he got leave to sit down in the servants’-hall. Nothing more likely than that!” added he, bitterly, as he walked up and down the little room in moody displeasure.

“No, no, papa, you mistake me,” said she, looking affectionately at him. “What I meant was this, that to a man so burdened with weighty cares—one whose brain carries so many great schemes and enterprises—a sense of humility, proud enough in its way, might naturally mingle with all the pleasures of the moment, whispering as it were to his heart, ‘Be not carried away by this flattery, be not carried away by your own esteem; it is less you than the work you are destined for that men are honouring. While they seem to cheer the pilot, it is rather the glorious ocean to which he is guiding them that they address their salutations.’ Might not some such consciousness as this have moved him at such a time?”

“Indeed, I don’t know, and I don’t much care,” said Kellett, sulkily. “I suppose people don’t feel, now-a-days, the way they used when I was young. There’s new inventions in everything.”

“Human nature is the same in all ages!” said she, faintly.

“Faith, and so much the worse for it, Bella. There’s more bad than good in life—more cruelty, and avarice, and falsehood, than there’s kindness, benevolence, and honesty. For one good-natured act I’ve met with, haven’t I met twenty, thirty, no, but fifty, specimens of roguery and double-dealing. If you want to praise the world, don’t call Paul Kellett into court, that’s all!”

“So far from agreeing with you,” cried she, springing up and drawing her arm within his, “you are exactly the very testimony I’d adduce. From your own lips have I heard more stories of generosity—more instances of self-devotion, trustfulness, and true kindness—than I have ever listened to in life.”

“Ay, amongst the poor, Bella—amongst the poor!” said Kellett, half ashamed of his recantation.

“Be assured, then, that these traits are not peculiar to any class. The virtues of the poor, like their sufferings, are more in evidence than in any other condition—their lives are laid bare

by poverty ; but I feel assured people are better than we think them—better than they know themselves.”

“I’m waiting to hear you tell me that I’m richer, too,” said Kellett, with a half-melancholy laugh—“that I have an elegant credit in a bank somewhere, if I only knew where to draw upon it!”

“There is this wealth in the heart of man, if he but knew how to profit by it: it is to teach us this lesson that great men have arisen from time to time. The poets, the warriors, the explorers, the great in science, set us all the same task, to see the world fair as it really is, to recognise the good around us, to subdue the erroneous thoughts that, like poisonous weeds, stifle the wholesome vegetation of our hearts, and to feel that the cause of humanity is our cause, its triumphs our triumphs, its losses our losses!”

“It may be all as you say, Bella darling, but it’s not the kind of world ever I saw. I never knew men do anything but cheat each other and tell lies; and the hardest of it all,” added he, with a bitter sigh, “that, maybe, it is your own flesh and blood treats you worst!”

This reflection announced the approach of gloomy thoughts. This was about the extent of any allusion he would ever make to his son, and Bella was careful not to confirm him in the feeling by discussing or opposing it. She understood his nature well. She saw that some fortunate incident or other, even time, might dissipate what had never been more than a mere prejudice, while, if reasoned with, he was certain to argue himself into the conviction that of all the rubs he had met in life his son Jack’s conduct was the hardest and the worst.

The long and painful silence that now ensued was at length broken by a loud knocking at the door of the cottage, a sound so unusual as to startle them both.

“That’s at *our* door, Bella,” said he. “I wonder who it can be? Beecher couldn’t come out this time of the night.”

“There it is again,” said Bella, taking a light. “I’ll go and see who’s there.”

“No, let me go,” cried Kellett, taking the candle from her hand, and leaving the room with the firm step of a man about to confront a danger.

“Captain Kellett lives here, doesn’t he?” said a tall young fellow, in the dress of a soldier in the Rifles.

Kellett’s heart sank heavily within him as he muttered a faint “Yes.”

"I'm the bearer of a letter for him," said the soldier, "from his son."

"From Jack!" burst out Kellett, unable to restrain himself. "How is he? Is he well?"

"He's all right now; he was invalided after that explosion in the trenches, but he's all right again. We all suffered more or less on that night;" and his eyes turned half inadvertently towards one side, where Kellett now saw that an empty coat-sleeve was hanging.

"It was there you left your arm, then, poor fellow," said Kellett, taking him kindly by the hand. "Come in and sit down; I'm Captain Kellett. A fellow-soldier of Jack's, Bella," said Kellett, as he introduced him to his daughter; and the young man bowed with all the ease of perfect good breeding.

"You left my brother well, I hope?" said Bella, whose womanly tact saw at once that she was addressing her equal.

"So well that he must be back to his duty ere this. This letter is from him, but as he had not many minutes to write, he made me promise to come and tell you myself all about him. Not that I needed his telling me, for I owe my life to your son, Captain Kellett; he carried me in on his back under the sweeping fire of a Russian battery; two rifle bullets pierced his chako as he was doing it; he must have been riddled with shot if the Russians had not stopped their fire."

"Stopped their fire!"

"That they did, and cheered him heartily. How could they help it; he was the only man on that rude glacis, torn and gullied with shot and shell."

"Oh, the noble fellow!" burst out the girl, as her eyes ran over.

"Isn't he a noble fellow?" said the soldier. "We don't want for brave fellows in that army; but show me one will do what he did. It was a shot carried off this," said he, touching the empty sleeve of his jacket; "and I said something—I must have been wandering in my mind—about a ring my mother had given me, and it was on the finger of that poor hand. Well, what does Jack Kellett do, while the surgeon was dressing my wound, but set off to the place where I was shot down, and, under all that hailstorm of Minié-balls, brought in the limb. That's the ring—he rescued it at the risk of his life. There's more than courage in that; there's a goodness and kindness of heart, worth more than all the bravery that ever stormed a battery."

"And yet he left me—deserted his poor father!" cried old Kellett, sobbing.



"If he did so, it was to make a name for you that the first man in England might be proud of."

"To go off and list as a common soldier!" said Kellett; and then, suddenly shocked at his own rudeness, and shamed by the deep blush on Sybella's face, he stammered out, "not but I've known many a man with good blood in his veins—many a born gentleman—serving in the ranks."

"Well, I hope so," said the other, laughing with a hearty good nature. "It's not exactly so common a thing with us as with our worthy allies the French; but every now and then you'll find a firelock in the hands that once held a double-barrelled Manton, and maybe knocked over the pheasants in his own father's preserves."

"Indeed, I have heard of such things," said Kellett, with a sigh; but he was evidently lending his assent on small security, because he cared little for the venture.

"How poor Jack loves you!" cried Bella, who, deep in her brother's letter, had paid no attention to what was passing; "he calls you Charley—nothing but Charley."

"My name is Charles Conway," said the young man, smiling pleasantly.

"Charley," read she aloud, "'my banker when I haven't a shilling, my nurse in hospital, my friend always—he'll hand you this, and tell you all about me. How the dear old dad will love to hear his stories of campaigning life, so like his own Peninsular tales. He'll see that the long peace has not tamed the native pluck of the race, but that the fellows are just as daring, just as steady, just as invincible as ever they were; and he'll say, too, that to have won the friendship of such a comrade I must have good stuff in me also.'"

"Oh! if he hadn't gone away and left his old father!" broke in Kellett, lamentingly; "sure it wasn't the time to leave me."

"Wasn't it, though?" broke in the soldier; "I differ with you there. It was the very moment that every fellow with a dash of spirit about him should have offered his services. We can't all have commissions—we can't all of us draw handsome allowances from our friends; but we can surely take our turn in the trenches, and man a battery; and it's not a bad lesson to teach the common fellow, that for pluck, energy, and even holding out, the gentleman is at least his equal."

"I think it's the first of the name ever served in the ranks," said the old man, who, with a perverse obstinacy, would never wander from this one idea.

"How joyously he writes," continued Bella, as she bent over the letter: "I see by the papers, dearest Bella, that we are all disgusted and dispirited out here—that we have nothing but grievances about green coffee and raw pork, and the rest of it; don't believe a word of it. We do curse the Commissariat now and then. It smacks like epicurism to abuse the rations; but ask Charley if these things are ever thought of after we rise from dinner and take a peep at those grim old earthworks, that somehow seem growing every day, or if we grumble about fresh vegetables as we are told off for a covering party. There's plenty of fighting; and, if any man hasn't enough in the regular way, he can steal out of a clear night and have a pop at the Russians from a rifle-pit. I'm twice as quick a shot as I was when I left home, and I confess the sport has double the excitement of my rambles after grouse over Mahers Mountain. It puts us on our mettle, too, to see our old enemies the French taking the work with us; not but they have given us the lion's share of it, and left our small army to do the same duties as their large one. One of the regiments in our brigade, rather than flinch from their share, returned themselves twelve hundred strong, while they had close upon three hundred sick—ay, and did the work, too. Ask dad if his Peninsulars beat that? Plenty of hardships, plenty of roughing, and plenty of hard knocks there are, but it's the jolliest life ever a fellow led, for all that. Every day has its own story of some dashing bit of bravery, that sets us all wild with excitement, while we wonder to ourselves what do you all think of us in England. Here comes an order to summon all to close their letters, and so I shut up, with my fondest affection to the dear old dad and yourself.

"Ever yours,

"JACK KELLETT.

"As I don't suppose you'll see it in the *Gazette*, I may as well say that I'm to be made a corporal on my return to duty. It's a long way yet to Major-General, but at least I'm on the road, Bella."

"A corporal! a corporal!" exclaimed Kellett; "may I never, if I know whether it's not a dream. Paul Kellett's eldest son—Kellett of Kellett's Court—a corporal!"

"My father's prejudices all attach to the habits of his own day," said Bella, in a low voice, to the soldier—"to a time totally unlike the present in everything."

"Not in everything, Miss Kellett," said the youth, with a quiet smile. "Jack has just told you that all the old ardour, all the old spirit, is amongst the troops. They are the sons and grandsons of the gallant fellows that beat the French out of Spain."

"And are *you* going back?" asked Kellett, half moodily, and scarcely knowing what he said.

"They won't have me," said the soldier, blushing as he looked at his empty sleeve; "they want fellows who can handle a Minié rifle."

"Oh, to be sure—I ought to have known—I was forgetting," stammered he out, confusedly; "but you have your pension, anyhow."

"I've a kind old mother, which is better," said the youth, blushing deeper again. "She only gave me a short leave to run over and see Jack Kellett's family: for she knows Jack, by name at least, as if he were her own."

To Bella's questions he replied, that his mother had a small cottage near Bettws, at the foot of Snowdon; it was one of the most picturesque spots of all Wales, and in one of those sunny nooks where the climate almost counterfeits the south of Europe.

"And now you'll go back, and live tranquilly there," said the girl, half dreamily, for her thoughts were wandering away Heaven knows where.

The youth saw the preoccupation, and arose to take his leave. "I shall be writing to Jack to-morrow, Captain Kellett," said he. "I may say I have seen you well and hearty, and I may tell the poor fellow—I'm sure you'll let me tell him—that you have heartily forgiven him?" Old Kellett shook his head mournfully; and the other went on: "It's a hard thing of a dark night in the trenches, or while you lie on the wet ground in front of them, thinking of home and far away, to have any one thought but love and affection in your heart. It doesn't do to be mourning over faults and follies, and grieving over things one is sorry for. One likes to think, too, that they who are at home, happy at their firesides, are thinking kindly of us. A man's heart is never so stout before the enemy as when he knows how dear he is to some one far away."

As the youth spoke these words half falteringly, for he was naturally bashful and timid, Bella turned her eyes fully upon his, with an interest she had not felt before, and he reddened as he returned her gaze.

"I'm sure you forgive *me*, Sir," said he, addressing Kellett. "It was a great liberty I took to speak to you in this fashion; but I was Jack's comrade—he told me every secret he had in the world, and I know how the poor fellow would march up to a Russian battery to-morrow with an easier heart than he'd hear one hard word from you."

"Ask Bella there if I ever said a word, ever as much as mentioned his name," said Kellett, with all the self-satisfaction of egotism.

Bella's eyes quickly turned towards the soldier, with an expression so full of significance that he only gave a very faint sigh, and muttered:

"Well, I can do no more; when I next hear from Jack, Sir, you shall know it." And with this he moved towards the door.

Bella hastily whispered a few words in her father's ear, to which, as he seemed to demur, she repeated still more eagerly.

"How could we, since it's Sunday, and there will be Beecher coming out?" muttered he.

"But this is a gentleman, papa; his soldier jacket is surely no disgrace——"

"I couldn't, I couldn't," muttered he, doggedly.

Again she whispered, and at last he said:

"Maybe you'd take your bit of dinner with us to-morrow, Conway—quite alone, you know."

The young fellow drew himself up, and there was, for an instant, a look of haughty, almost insolent, meaning in his face. There was that, however, in Bella's which as speedily overcame whatever irritation had crossed his mind, and he politely said:

"If you will admit me in this dress—I have no other with me."

"To be sure—of course," broke in Kellett. "When my son is wearing the same, what could I say against it?"

The youth smiled good-naturedly at this not very gracious speech; mayhap the hand he was then holding in his own compensated for its rudeness, and his "Good-by!" was uttered in all frankness and cordiality.

CHAPTER XIV.

A DINNER AT PAUL KELLETT'S.

To all you gentlemen who live at home at ease there are few things less troublesome than the arrangement of what is called a dinner party. Some difficulty may possibly exist as to the guests. Lady Mary may be indisposed. It might not be quite right to ask Sir Harry to meet the Headleys. A stray embarrassment or two will arise to require a little thought or a little management. The material details, however, give no care. There is a stereotyped mode of feeding one's friends, out of which it is not necessary, were it even possible, to issue. *Your* mock-turtle may have a little more or less the flavour of Madeira; your salmon be somewhat thicker in the shoulder; your sirloin be a shade more or less underdone; your side dishes a little more or less uneatable than your neighbour's, but, after all, from the caviare to the cheese, the whole thing follows an easy routine, and the dinner of No. 12 is the fac-simile of the dinner at No. 13; and the same silky voice that whispers "Sherry, Sir?" has its echo along the whole street. The same toned-down uniformity pervades the intellectual elements of the feast—all is quiet, jog-trot, and habitual; a gentle atmosphere of murmuring dulness is diffused around, very favourable to digestion, and rather disposing to sleep.

How different are all these things in the case of the poor man—especially when he happens to be a reduced gentleman, whose memories of the past are struggling and warring with exigencies of the present, and the very commonest necessities are matters of grave difficulty.

Kellett was very anxious to impress his son's friend with a sense of his social standing and importance, and he told Bella "not to mind spending the whole week's allowance, just to show the soldier what Jack's family was." A leg of mutton and a

little of Kinnahan's port constituted, in his mind, a very high order of entertainment; and these were at once voted. Bella hoped that after the first outburst of this ostentatious fit he would fall back in perfect indifference about the whole matter; but far from it—his waking thought in the morning was the dinner, and when she remarked to him at breakfast on the threatening aspect of the clouds, his reply was, "No matter, dear, if we have plenty of capers." Even the unhappy possibility of Beecher's "dropping in" was subordinate to his wish to cut a figure on the occasion; and he pottered about from the dining-room to the kitchen, peeped into saucepans, and scrutinised covered dishes with a most persistent activity. Nor was Bella herself quite averse to all this. She saw in the distance—remotely it might be—the glimmering of a renewed interest about poor Jack. "The pleasure this little incident imparts," thought she, "will spread its influence wider. He'll talk of him, too—he'll be led on to let him mingle with our daily themes. Jack will be one of us once more after this;" and so she encouraged him to make of the occasion a little festival.

What skill did she not practise, what devices of taste not display, to cover over the hard features of their stern poverty! The few little articles of plate which remained after the wreck of their fortune were placed on the sideboard, conspicuous amongst which was a cup "presented by his brother officers to Captain Paul Kellett, on his retirement from the regiment, with which he had served thirty-eight years"—a testimonial only exhibited on the very most solemn occasions. His sword and sash—the same he wore at Waterloo—were arrayed over the fireplace, and his Talavera chako—grievously damaged by a French sabre—hung above them. "If he begins about 'that expedition'"—it was thus he always designated the war in the Crimea—"Bella, I'll just give him a touch of the real thing, as we had it in the Peninsula! Faith, it wasn't digging holes in the ground we were then;" and he laughed to himself at the absurdity of the conceit.

The few flowers which the garden owned at this late season, humble and common as they were, figured on the chimney-piece, and not a resource of ingenuity was neglected to make that little dinner-room look pleasant and cheery. Fully a dozen times had Kellett gone in and out the room, never weary of admiring it, and as constantly muttering to himself some praise of Bella, to whose taste it was all owing. "I'd put the cup in the middle of the table, Bella. The wallflowers would do well enough at the

sideboard. Well, maybe you're right, darling; it is less pretentious, to be sure. And be careful, dear, that old Betty has a clean apron. May I never, but she's wearing the same one since Candlemas! And don't leave her any corks to draw—she's the devil for breaking them into the bottle. I'll sit here, where I can have the screw at my hand. There's a great convenience in a small room, after all. By the good day, here's Beecher!" exclaimed he, as that worthy individual approached the door.

"What's all this for, Kellett, old boy? Are you expecting the Viceroy, or celebrating a family festival, eh? What does it mean?"

"Tis a mutton chop I was going to give a friend of Jack's—a young fellow that brought me a letter from him yesterday."

"Oh! your son Jack. By the way, what's his regiment—Light Dragoons, isn't it?"

"No; the Rifles," said Kellett, with a short cough.

"He's pretty high up for his lieutenantancy by this, ain't he?" said Beecher, rattling on. "He joined before Alma, didn't he?"

"Yes; he was at the battle," said Kellett, dryly; for though he had once or twice told his honourable friend that Jack was in the service, he had not mentioned that he was in the ranks. Not that Annesley Beecher would have in the least minded the information. The fact could not by possibility have touched himself; it never could have compelled *him* to mount guard, do duty in the trenches, eat Commissariat biscuit, or submit to any of the hardships soldiery inflicts; and he'd have heard of Jack's fate with all that sublime philosophy which teaches us to bear tranquilly the calamities of others.

"Why don't you stir yourself to get him a step? There's nothing to be had without asking! ay, worse than asking—begging, worrying, importuning. Get some fellow in one of the offices to tell you when there's a vacancy, and then up and at them. If they say, 'We are only waiting for an opportunity, Captain Kellett,' you reply, 'Now's your time then. Groves, of the Forty-sixth, is gone "toes up"—Simpson, of the Bays, has cut his lucky this morning.' That's the way to go to work."

"You are wonderful!" exclaimed Kellett, who really did all but worship the worldly wisdom of his friend.

"I'd ask Lackington, but he's no use to any one. Just look at my own case." And now he launched forth into the theme he really loved and never found wearisome. His capacity for anything—everything, his exact fitness for fifty opposite duties, his readiness to be a sinecurist, and his actual necessity for a

salary, were subjects he could be eloquent on; devoting occasional passing remarks to Lackington's intense stupidity, who never exerted himself for him, and actually "thought him a flat." "I know you won't believe—but he does, I assure you—he thinks me a flat!"

Before Kellett could fully rally from the astounding force of such an unjustifiable opinion, his guest, Conway, knocked at the door.

"I say, Kellett, there comes an apology from your friend."

"How so?" asked Kellett, eagerly.

"I just saw a soldier come up to the door, and the chances are it's an officer's servant with a note of excuse."

The door opened as he spoke, and Conway entered the room. Kellett met him with an honest cordiality, and then, turning to Beecher, said,

"My son's friend and comrade—Mr. Annesley Beecher;" and the two men bowed to each other, and exchanged glances that scarcely indicated much pleasure at the acquaintance.

"Why, he's in the ranks, Kellett," whispered Beecher, as he drew him into the window.

"So is my son," said Kellett, with a gulp that half choked him.

"The deuce he is—you never told me that. And is this our dinner company?"

"I was just going to explain——Oh, here's Bella!" and Miss Kellett entered, giving such a cordial greeting to the soldier that made Beecher actually astounded.

"What's his name, Kellett?" said Beecher, half languidly.

"A good name, for the matter of that—he's called Conway."

"Conway—Conway?" repeated Beecher, aloud, "we have fortieth cousins, Conways. There was a fellow called Conway in the Twelfth Lancers that went a tremendous pace; they nicknamed him the 'Smasher,' I don't know why. Do you?" said he, addressing the soldier.

"I've heard it was from an awkward habit he had of putting his heel on snobs."

"Oh! you know him, perhaps?" said Beecher, affectedly.

"Why, as I was the man myself, I ought, according to the old adage, to say I knew but little of him."

"You Conway of the Twelfth! the same that owned Brushwood and Lady Killer, that won the Riddlesworth?"

"You're calling up old memories to me," said the youth, smiling, "which, after all, I'd just as soon forget."

"And you were an officer in the Lancers!" exclaimed Kellett, eagerly.

"Yes; I should have had my troop by this, if I hadn't owned those fortunate three-year-olds Mr. Beecher has just reminded me of. Like many others, whom success on the turf has misled, I went on madly, quite convinced I had fortune with me."

"Ah!" said Beecher, moralising, "There's no doing a good stroke of work without the Legs. Cranley tried it, Hawchcome tried it, Ludborough tried it, but it won't do. As Grog Davis says, 'you must not ignore existing interests.'"

"There's another name I haven't heard for many a year. What a scoundrel that fellow was! I've good ground for believing that this Davis it was poisoned Sir Aubrey, the best horse I ever owned. Three men of his stamp would make racing a sport unfit for gentlemen."

"Miss Kellett, will you allow me?" said Beecher, offering his arm, and right well pleased that the announcement of dinner cut short the conversation.

"A nice fellow that friend of your brother's," muttered he, as he led her along; "but what a stupid thing to go and serve in the ranks! It's about the last step I'd ever have thought of taking."

"I'm certain of it," said Bella, with an assent so ready as to sound like flattery.

As the dinner proceeded, old Kellett's astonishment continued to increase at the deference paid by Beecher to every remark that fell from Conway. The man who had twice won "the Bexley," and all but won "the Elms;" he who owned Sir Aubrey, and actually took the odds against all "Holt's stable," was no common celebrity. In vain was it Conway tried to lead the conversation to his friend Jack—what they had seen, and where they had been together—Beecher would bring them back to the Turf and the *Racing Calendar*. There were so many dark things he wanted to know—so much of secret history he hoped to be enlightened in—and whenever, as was often the case, Conway did not and could not give him the desired information, Beecher slyly intimated by a look towards Kellett that he was a deep fellow, while he muttered to himself, "Grog Davis would have it out of him, notwithstanding all his cunning."

Bella alone wished to hear about the war. It was not alone that her interest was excited for her brother, but in the great events of that great struggle her enthusiastic spirit found ample

material for admiration. Conway related many heroic achievements, not alone of British soldiers, but of French and even Russians. Gallantry, as he said, was of no nation in particular, there were brave fellows everywhere; and he told, with all the warmth of honest admiration, how daringly the enemy dashed into the lines at night and confronted certain death, just for the sake of causing an interruption to the siege, and delaying even for a brief space the advance of the works. Told as these stories were with all the freshness which actual observation confers, and in a spirit of unexaggerated simplicity, still old Kellett heard them with the peevish jealousy of one who felt that they were destined to eclipse in their interest the old scenes of Spain and Portugal. That any soldiers lived now-a-days like the old Light Division—that there were such fellows as the fighting Fifth, or Crawford's Brigade—no man should persuade him; and when he triumphantly, asked if they hadn't as good a general as Sir Arthur Wellesley, he fell back, laughing contemptuously at the idea of such being deemed war at all, or the expedition, as he would term it, being styled a campaign.

"Remember, Captain Kellett, we had a fair share of your old Peninsular friends amongst us—gallant veterans, who had seen everything from the Douro to Bayonne."

"Well, and didn't they laugh at all this? didn't they tell you fairly it was not fighting?"

"I'm not so sure they did," said Conway, laughing good-naturedly. "Gordon told an officer in my hearing, that the charge up the heights at the Alma reminded him strongly of Harding's ascent of the hills at Albuera."

"No, no, don't say that—I can't stand it!" cried Kellett, peevishly; "sure if it was only that one thinks they were Frenchmen—Frenchmen, with old Soult at their head—at Albuera——"

"There's nothing braver than a Russian, Sir, depend on't," said the youth, with a slight warmth in his tone.

"Brave, if you like; but, you see, he isn't a soldier by nature, like the Frenchman; and yet we beat the French, thrashed him from the sea to the Pyrenees, and over the Pyrenees into France."

"What's the odds? You'd not do it again; or, if you did, not get Nap to abdicate. I'd like to have two thousand to fifty on the double event," said Beecher, chuckling over an imaginary betting-book.

"And why not do it again?" broke in Bella. "Is it after

listening to what we have heard this evening that we have cause for any faint-heartedness about the spirit of our soldiery? Were Cressy or Agincourt won by braver fellows than now stand entrenched around Sebastopol?"

"I don't like it," as Grog says; "never make a heavy book on a waiting race!"

"I conclude, then," said Conway, "you are one of those who augur ill of our success in the present war?"

"I'd not stake an even fifty, on either side," said Beecher, who had shrewd suspicions that it was what he'd have called a "cross," and that Todleben and Lord Raglan could make "things comfortable" at any moment. "I see Miss Bella's of my mind," added he, as he perceived a very peculiar smile just parting her lips.

"I suspect not, Mr. Beecher," said she, slyly.

"Why did you laugh, then?"

"Shall I tell you? It was just this, then, passing in my mind. I was wondering within myself whether the habit of reducing all men's motives to the standard of morality observable in the 'Ring' more often led to mistakes, or the contrary."

"I sincerely trust that it rarely comes right," broke in Conway. "I was close upon four years on the Turf, as they call it; and if I hadn't been ruined in time, I'd have ended by believing that an honest man was as great a myth as anything we read of amongst the heathen gods."

"That all depends upon what you call honest," said Beecher.

"To be sure it does; you're right there," chimed in Kellett; and Beecher, thus seconded, went on:

"Now, I call a fellow honest when he won't put his pal into a hole—when he'll tell him whenever he has got a good thing, and let him have his share—when he'll warn him against a dark lot, and not let him 'in' to oblige any one—that's honesty."

"Well, perhaps it is," said Conway, laughing. "The Russians said it was mercy t'other day, when they went about shooting the wounded. There's no accounting for the way men are pleased to see things."

"I'd like to have *your* definition of honesty," said Beecher, slightly piqued by the last remark.

"How can you expect me to give you one? Have I not just told you I was for more than three years on the turf, had a racing stable, and dealt with trainers and jocks?" He paused for a second or two, and then, in a stronger voice, went on: "I

cannot believe that the society of common soldiers is a very high standard by which to measure either manners or motives; and yet I pledge my word to it, that my comrades, in comparison with my old companions of the turf, were unexceptionable gentlemen. I mean that, in all that regards truthfulness, fair dealing, and honourable intercourse, it would be insult to compare them."

"Ah, you see," said Beecher, "you got it 'all hot,' as they say. You're not an unprejudiced jurymen. They gave you a bucketing—I heard all about it. If Corporal Trim hadn't been doctored, you'd have won twelve thousand at Lancaster."

Conway smiled good-humouredly at the explanation thus suggested, but said nothing.

"Bother it for racing," said Kellett. "I never knew any real taste for horses or riding where there was races. Instead of caring for a fine, showy beast, a little thick in the shoulder, square in the joints, and strong in the haunch, they run upon things like greyhounds, all drawn up behind and low before; it's a downright misery to mount one of them."

"But it's a real pleasure to see him come in first, when your book tells you seven to one in your favour. Talk of sensations," said he, enthusiastically; "where is there the equal of that you feel when the orange and blue you have backed with a heavy pot comes pelting round the corner, followed by two—then three—all punishing, your own fellow holding on beautifully, with one eye a little thrown backward to see what's coming, and that quiet, calm look about the mouth that says, 'I have it.' Every note of the wild cheer that greets the winner is applause to your own heart—that deafening yell is your own song of triumph."

"Listen to him!—that's his hobby," cried Kellett, whose eyes glistened with excitement at the description, and who really felt an honest admiration for the describer. "Ah, Beecher, my boy!—you're at home there."

"If they'd only give me a chance, Paul—one chance!"

Whether it was that the expression was new and strange to him, or that the energy of the speaker astonished him, but Conway certainly turned his eyes towards him in some surprise; a sentiment which Beecher at once interpreting as interest, went on:

"You," said he—"you had many a chance; I never had one. You might have let them all in, you might have landed them all—so they tell me, at least—if you'd have withdrawn Eyetooth.

He was own brother to Aurelius, and sure to win. Well, if you'd have withdrawn him for the Bexley, you'd have netted fifty thousand. Grog—I mean a fellow 'well up' among the Legs—told me so."

"Your informant never added what every gentleman in England would have said of me next day," said Conway. "It would have been neither more nor less than a swindle. The horse was in perfect health and top condition—why should I not have run him?"

"For no other reason that I know, except that you'd have been richer by fifty thousand for not doing it."

"Well," said Conway, quietly, "it's not a very pleasant thing to be crippled in this fashion; but I'd rather lose the other arm than do what you speak of. And, if I didn't know that many gentlemen get a loose way of talking of fifty things they'd never seriously think of doing, I'd rather feel disposed to be offended at what you have just said."

"Offended! of course not—I never dreamed of anything offensive. I only meant to say that they call *me* a flat; but hang me if I'd have let them off as cheaply as you did."

"Then they're at perfect liberty to call me a flat also," said Conway, laughing. "Indeed, I suspect I have given them ample reason to think me one."

The look of compassionate pity Beecher bestowed on him as he uttered these words was as honest as anything in his nature could be.

It was in vain Bella tried to get back the conversation to the events of the campaign, to the scenes wherein poor Jack was an actor. Beecher's perverse activity held them chained to incidents which, to him, embraced all that was worth living for. "You must have had some capital things in your time, though. You had some race-horses, and were well in with Tom Nolan's set," said he to Conway.

"Shall I tell you the best match I ever had—at least, the one gave me most pleasure?"

"Do, by all means," said Beecher, eagerly, "though I guess it already. It was against Vickersley, even for ten thousand, at York."

"No," said the other, smiling.

"Well, then, it was the Cotswold—four miles in two heats. You won it with a sister to Ladybird."

"Nor that either; though by these reminiscences you show me how accurately you have followed my humble fortunes."

"There's not a man has done anything on the turf for fifty years I can't give you his history; not a horse I won't tell you all his performances, just as if you were reading it out of the *Racing Calendar*. As *Bell's Life* said t'other day, 'If Annesley Beecher can't answer that question'—and it was about Running Rein—'no man in England can.' I'm 'The Fellow round the Corner' that you always see alluded to in *Bell*."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Conway, with assumed deference.

"That I am—Kellett knows it. Ask old Paul there—ask Grog—ask any one you like, whether A. B. is up to a thing or two. But we're forgetting this match—the best thing you said you ever had."

"I'm not so sure you'll be of my mind when you hear it," said Conway, smiling. "It was a race we had t'other day in the Crimea—a steeplechase, over rather a stiff course, with Spanish ponies; and I rode against Lord Broodale, Sir Harry Curtis, and Captain Marsden, and won five pounds and a dozen of champagne. My comrades betted something like fifty shillings on the match, and there would have been a general bankruptcy in the company if I had lost. Poor Jack mortgaged his watch and a pilot-coat that he was excessively proud of—it was the only bit of mufti in the battalion, I think; but he came off all right, and treated us all to a supper with his winnings, which, if I don't mistake, didn't pay more than half the bill."

"Good luck to him, and here's his health," cried Kellett, whose heart, though proof against all ordinary appeals to affection, could not withstand this assault of utter recklessness and improvidence. "He's my own flesh and blood, there's no denying it."

If Conway was astounded at this singular burst of paternal affection, he did not the less try to profit by it, and at once began to recount the achievements of his comrade, Jack Kellett. The old man listened half doggedly at first, but gradually, as the affection of others for his son was spoken of, he relaxed, and heard, with an emotion he could not easily repress, how Jack was beloved by the whole regiment—that to be his companion in outpost duty, to be stationed with him in a battery, was a matter of envy. "I won't say," said Conway, "that every corps and every company has not fellows brave as he; but show me one who'll carry a lighter spirit into danger, and as soft a heart amid scenes of cruelty and bloodshed. So that if you asked who in our battalion is the pluckiest—who the most tender-hearted—who the most generous—and who the least given to envy? you'd have the one answer—'Jack Kellett,' without a doubt."

"And what will it all do for him?" broke in the old man, resorting once more to his discontent.

"What will it do for him? What has it done for him? Is it nothing that in a struggle history will make famous a man's name is a household word? That in a war, where deeds of daring are so rife, his outnumbers those of any other? It's but a few weeks back a Sardinian staff-officer, coming to our headquarters on business, asked if the celebrated 'Bersagliere' was there—so they call riflemen—and desired to see him; and, better than that, though he didn't know Jack's name, none doubted who was meant, but Jack Kellett was sent for on the instant. Now, that I call fame."

"Will it get him his commission?" said Beecher, knowingly, as though by one shrewd stroke of intelligence he had embraced the entire question.

"A commission can be had for four hundred and fifty pounds, and some man in Parliament to ask for it. But what Jack has done cannot be bought by mere money. Do you go out there, Mr. Beecher, just go and see for yourself—it's well worth the while—what stuff fellows are made of that face danger every day and night, without one thought above duty—never expecting—never dreaming that anything they do is to have its personal benefit, and would far rather have their health drunk by their comrades than be quoted in the *Times*. You'll find your old regiment there—you were in the Fusilier Guards, weren't you?"

"Yes, I tried soldiering, but didn't like it," said Beecher; "and it was better in my day than *now*, they tell me."

A movement of impatience on Conway's part was suddenly interrupted by Kellett saying, "He means that the service isn't what it was; and indeed he's right there. I remember the time there wasn't a man in the Eighty-fifth couldn't carry away three bottles of Bennett's strong port, and play as good a rubber, afterwards, as Hoyle himself."

"It's the snobbery I was thinking of," said Beecher; "fellows go into the army now who ought to be counter-jumping."

"I don't know what they ought to be doing," broke in Conway, angrily, "but I could tell you something of what they are doing; and where you are to find men to do it better, I'm not so clear. I said a few moments back, you ought to go out to the Crimea, but I beg to correct myself—it is exactly what you ought not to do."

"Never fear, old fellow; I never dreamed of it. Give you

any odds you like, you'll never see my arrival quoted at Balaklava."

"A thousand pardons, Miss Kellett," whispered Conway, as he arose, "but you see how little habit I have of good company; I'm quite ashamed of my warmth. May I venture to come and pay you a morning visit before I go back?"

"Oh, by all means; but why not an evening one? You are more certain to find us."

"Then an evening one, if you'll allow me;" and shaking Kellett's hand warmly, and with a cold bow to Beecher, he withdrew.

"Wasn't he a flat!" cried Beecher, as the door closed after him. "The Smasher—that was the name he went by—went through an estate of six thousand a year, clean and clear, in less than four years, and there he is now, a private soldier with one arm!"

"Faith, I like him; he's a fine fellow," said Kellett, heartily.

"Ask Grog Davis if he'd call him a fine fellow," broke in Beecher, sneeringly; "there's not such a spoon from this to Newmarket. Oh, Paul, my hearty, if I had but one, just one of the dozen chances he has thrown away! But, as Grog says, 'a crowbar won't make a cracksman;' nor will a good stable of horses, and safe jocks 'bring a fellow round,' if he hasn't it here." And he touched his forehead with his forefinger most significantly.

Meanwhile Charles Conway sauntered slowly back to town, on the whole somewhat a sadder man than he had left it in the morning. His friend Jack had spoken much to him of his father and sister, and why, or to what extent, he knew not, but, somehow, they did not respond to his own self-drawn picture of them. Was it that he expected old Kellett would have been a racier version of his son—the same dashing, energetic spirit—seeing all for the best in life, and accepting even its reverses in a half jocular humour? had he hoped to find in him Jack's careless, easy temper—a nature so brimful of content as to make all around sharers in its own blessings? or had he fancied a "fine old Irish gentleman" of that thorough-bred school he had so often heard of?

Nor was he less disappointed with Bella; he thought she had been handsomer, or, at least, quite a different kind of beauty. Jack was blue-eyed and Saxon-looking, and he fancied that she must be a "blonde," with the same frank, cheery expression of her brother; and he found her dark-haired and dark-skinned, almost

Spanish in her look—the cast of her features grave almost to sadness. She spoke, too, but little, and never once reminded him, by a tone, a gesture, or a word, of his old comrade.

Ah! how these self-created portraits do puzzle and disconcert us through life! How they will obtrude themselves into the foreground, making the real and the actual but mere shadows in the distance. What seeming contradiction, too, do they create as often as we come into contact with the true and find it all so widely the reverse of what we dreamed of! How often has the weary emigrant sighed over his own created promised land in the midst of the silent forest or the desolate prairie! How has the poor health-seeker sunk heavy-hearted amid scenes which, had he not misconstrued them to himself, he had deemed a paradise! These “Phrenographs” are very dangerous paintings, and the more so that we sketch them in unconsciously.

“Jack is the best of them, that’s clear,” said Conway, as he walked along; and yet, with all his affection for him, the thought did not bring the pleasure it ought to have done.

CHAPTER XV.

A HOME SCENE.

WHEN Paul Kellett described Mr. Davenport Dunn's almost triumphal entry into Dublin, he doubtless fancied in his mind the splendours that awaited him at home; the troops of servants in smart liveries, the homage of his household, and the costly entertainment which most certainly should celebrate his arrival. Public rumour had given to the hospitalities of that house a wide-extended fame. The fashionable fishmonger of the capital, his Excellency's "purveyor" of game, the celebrated Italian warehouse, all proclaimed him their best customer. "Can't let you have that turbot, Sir, till I hear from Mr. Dunn." "Only two pheasants to be had, Sir, and ordered for Mr. Dunn." "The white truffles only taken by one gentleman in town. None but Mr. Dunn would pay the price." The culinary traditions of his establishment threw the Castle into the background, and Kellett revelled in the notion of the great festivity that now welcomed his return. "Lords and Earls—the biggest salmon in the market—the first men of the land—and lobster sauce—ancient names and good families—with grouse, and 'Sneyd's Twenty-one'—that's what you may call life! It is wonderful, wonderful!" Now, when Paul enunciated the word "wonderful" in this sense, he meant it to imply that it was shameful, distressing, and very melancholy for the prospects of humanity generally. And then he amused himself by speculating whether Dunn liked it all—whether the unaccustomed elegance of these great dinners did not distress and pain him rather than give pleasure, and whether the very consciousness of his own low origin wasn't a poison that mingled in every cup he tasted.

"It's no use talking," muttered he to himself; "a man must be bred to it, like everything else. The very servants behind his chair frighten him; he's, maybe, eating with his knife, or

he's putting salt where he ought to put sugar, or he doesn't take the right kind of wine with his meat. Beecher says he'd know any fellow just by that, and then it's 'all up' with him. Wonderful, wonderful!"

How would it have affected these speculations had Kellett known that, while he was indulging them, Dunn had quietly issued by a back door from his house, and, having engaged a car, set out towards Clontarf? A drearier drive of a dreary evening none need wish for. Occasional showers were borne on the gusty wind, swooping past as though hurrying to some elemental congress far away, while along the shore the waves beat with that irregular plash that betokens wild weather at sea. The fitful moonlight rather heightened than diminished the dismal aspect of the scenery. For miles the bleak strand stretched away, no headland nor even a hillock marking the coast; the spectral gable of a ruined church being the only object visible against the leaden sky. Little garlands of paper, the poor tributes of the very poor, decorated the graves and the head-stones, and, as they rustled in the night wind, sounded like ghostly whisperings. The driver piously crossed himself as they passed the "uncannie" spot, but Dunn took no heed of it. To wrap his cloak tighter about him, to shelter more closely beneath his umbrella, were all that the dreary scene exacted from him; and except when a vivid flash of lightning made the horse swerve from the road and dash down into the rough shingle of the strand, he never adverted to the way or the weather.

"What's this—where are we going?" cried he, impatiently.

"'Tis the flash that frightened the beast, yer honner," said the man; "and, if it was plazin' to you, I'd rather turn back again."

"Turn back—where to?"

"To town, yer honner."

"Nothing of the kind; drive on, and quickly too. We have five miles yet before us, and it will be midnight ere we get over them at this rate."

Sulkily and unwillingly did he obey; and, turning from the shore, they entered upon a low, sandy road that traversed a wide and dreary tract, barely elevated a few feet above the sea. By degrees the little patches of grass and fern disappeared, and nothing stretched on either side but low sand hummocks, scantily covered with rushes. Sea-shells crackled beneath the wheels as they went, and after a while the deep booming of the sea,

thundering heavily along a sandy shore, apprised them that they had crossed the narrow neck of land which divided two bays.

"Are you quite certain you've taken the right road, my man?" cried Dunn, as he observed something like hesitation in the other's manner.

"It ought to be somewhere hereabout we turn off," said the man, getting down to examine more accurately from beneath. "There was a little cross put up to show the way, but I don't see it."

"But you have been here before. You told me you knew the place."

"I was here onst, and, by the same token, I swore I'd never come again. I lamed the best mare I ever put a collar on, dragging through this deep sand. Wirra, wirra! why the blazes wouldn't he live where other Christians do! There it is now; I see a light. Ah! bother them, it's out again."

Pushing forward as well as he might in the direction he had seen the light, he floundered heavily on, the wheels sinking nearly to the axles, and the horse stumbling at every step.

"Your horse is worth nothing, my good fellow; he hasn't strength to keep his legs," said Dunn, angrily.

"Good or bad, I'll give you lave to broil me on a gridiron if ever ye catch me coming the same road again. Ould Dunn won't have much company if he waits for me to bring them."

"I'll take good care not to tempt you!" said Dunn, angrily.

And now they plodded on in moody silence till they issued forth upon a little flat space, bounded on three sides by the sea, in the midst of which a small two-storied house stood, defended from the sea by a rough stone breakwater that rose above the lower windows.

"There it is now, bad luck to it!" said the carman, savagely, for his horse was so completely exhausted that he was obliged to walk at his head and lift him at every step.

"You may remain here till I want you," said Dunn, getting down and plodding his way through the heavy sand. Flakes of frothy seadrift swept past him as he went, and the wild wind carried the spray far inland in heavy showers, beating against the walls and windows of the lonely house, and making the slates rattle. A low wall of large stones across the door showed that all entrance by that means was denied; and Dunn turned towards the back of the house, where, sheltered by the low wall, a small door was detectable. He knocked several times at this

before any answer was returned. When, at last, a harsh voice from within called out,

"Don't ye hear who it is? confound ye! Open the door at once;" and Dunn was admitted into a large kitchen, where in a great straw chair beside the fire was seated the remains of a once powerful man, and who, although nearly ninety years of age, still preserved a keen eye, a searching look, and a quick impatience of manner rarely observable at his age.

"Well, father, how are you?" said Dunn, taking him affectionately by both hands, and looking kindly in his face.

"Hearty—stout and hearty," said the old man. "When did you arrive?"

"A couple of hours ago. I did not wait for anything but a biscuit and a glass of wine, when I set out here to see you. And you are well?"

"Just as you see: an odd pain or so across the back, and a swimming of the head—a kind of giddiness now and then, that's all. Put the light over there till I have a look at you. You're thinner, Davy, a deal thinner, than when you went away."

"I have nothing the matter with me; a little tired or so, that's all," said Dunn, hastily. "And how are things doing here, father, since I left?"

"There's little to speak of," said the old man. "There never is much doing at this season of the year. You heard, of course, that Gogarty has lost his suit; they're moving for a new trial, but they won't get it. Lanty Moore can't pay up the rest of the purchase for Slanestown, and I told Hankses to buy it in. Kelly's murderer was taken on Friday last, near Kilbride, and offers to tell, God knows what, if they won't hang him; and Sir Gilbert North is to be the new Secretary, if, as the *Evening Mail* says, Mr. Davenport Dunn concurs in the appointment"—and here the old man laughed till his eyes ran over. "That's all the news, Davy, of the last week; and now tell me yours. The papers say you were dining with kings and queens, and driving about in royal coaches all over the Continent—was it true, Davy?"

"You got my letters, of course, father?"

"Yes; and I couldn't make out the names, they were all new and strange to me. I want to have from yourself what like the people are—are they as hard-working, are they as 'cute as our own? There's just two things now in the world, coal and industry, sorra more than that. And so you dined with the King of France?"

"With the Emperor, father. I dined twice; he took me over to Fontainebleau and made me stay the day."

"You could tell him many a thing he'd never hear from another, Davy; you could explain to him what's doing here, and how he might imitate it over there—rooting out the old vermin and getting new stock in the land—eh, Davy?"

"He needs no counsels, at least from such as me," said Dunn.

"Faith, he might have worse, far worse. An Encumbered Estate Court would do all his work for him well, and the dirty word 'Confiscation' need never be uttered!"

"He knows the road he wants to go," said Dunn, curtly.

"So he may, but that doesn't prove it's the best way."

"Whichever path he takes he'll tread it firmly, father, and that's more than half the battle. If you only saw what a city he has made Paris——"

"That's just what I don't like. What's the good of beautifying, and gilding, or ornamenting what you're going to riddle with grape and smash with round shot? It's like dressing a sweep in a field-marshal's uniform. And we all know where it will be to-morrow or next day."

"That we don't, Sir. You're not aware that these spacious thoroughfares, these wide squares, these extended terraces, are so contrived that columns may march and manœuvre in them, squadrons charge, and great artillery act through them. The proudest temples of that splendid city serve as bastions,—the great Louvre itself is less a palace than a fortress."

"Ay, ay, ay," cackled the old man, to whom these revelations opened a new vista of thought. "But what's the use of it after all, Davy; he must trust somebody, and when it comes to that with anybody in life, where's his security, tell me that? But let us talk about home. Is it true the Ministry is going out?"

"They're safer than ever; take my word for it, father, that these fellows know the trick of it better than all that went before them. They'll just do whatever the nation and the *Times* dictate to them—a little slower, mayhap, than they are ordered, but they'll do it. They have no embarrassments of a policy of any kind, and the only pretence of a principle they possess is, to sit on the Treasury benches."

"And they're right, Davy—they're right," said the old man, energetically.

"I don't doubt but they are, Sir; the duty of the pilot is to take charge of the ship, but not to decide the port she sails for."

"I wish you were one of them, Davy; they'd suit *you*, and you'd suit *them*."

"So we should, Sir; and who knows what may turn up? I'm not impatient."

"That's right, Davy; that's the lesson I always taught you; wait—wait!"

"When did you see Driscoll, father?" asked Dunn, after a pause.

"He was here last week; he's up to his ears about that claim to the Beecher estate, Lord—Lord—— What's his name?"

"Lackington."

"Yes, Lord Lackington. He says if you were once come home, you'd get him leave to search the papers in the Record Tower at the Castle, and that it would be the making of himself if anything came out of it."

"He's always mare's nesting, Sir," said Dunn, carelessly.

"Faith, he has contrived to feather his own nest, anyhow," said the old man, laughing. "He lent Lord Glengariff five thousand pounds t'other day at six per cent., and on as good security as the Bank."

"Does he pretend to have discovered anything new with respect to that claim?"

"He says there's just enough to frighten them, and that *your* help—the two of ye together—could work it well."

"He has not, then, found out the claimant?"

"He has his name, and the regiment he's in, but that's all. He was talking of writing to him."

"If he's wise, he'll let it alone. What chance would a poor soldier in the ranks have against a great lord, if he had all the right in the world on his side?"

"So I told him; but he said we could make a fine thing out of it for all that; and somehow, Davy, he's mighty seldom mistaken."

"If he be, Sir, it is because he has hitherto only meddled with what lay within his power. He can scheme and plot and track out a clue in the little world he has lived in, but let him be careful how he venture upon that wider ocean of life where his craft would be only a cockboat."

"He hasn't *your* stuff in him, Davy," cried the old man, in ecstasy; and a very slight flush rose to the other's cheek at the words, but whether of pride, or shame, or pleasure, it were hard to say. "I've nothing to offer you, Davy, except a cut of cold pork; could you eat it?" said the old man.

"I'm not hungry, father; I'm tired somewhat, but not hungry."

"I'm tired, too," said the old man, sighing; "but, to be sure, it's time for me—I'll be eighty-nine if I live till the fourth of next month. That's a long life, Davy."

"And it has been an active one, Sir."

"I've seen great changes in my time, Davy," continued he, following out his own thoughts. "I was in the Volunteers when we bullied the English, and they've paid us off for it since, that they have! I was one of the Jury when Jackson died in the dock, and if he was alive now, maybe it's a Lord of the Treasury he'd be. Everything is changed, and everybody too. Do you remember Kellett, of Kellett's Court, that used to drive on the Circular-road with six horses?"

Dunn nodded an assent.

"His liveries were light-blue and silver, and Lord Castle-town's was the same; and Kellett said to him one day, 'My Lord,' says he, 'we're always mistaken for each other, couldn't we hit on a way to prevent it?' 'I'm willing,' says my Lord, 'if I only knew how,' 'Then I'll tell you,' says Kellett; 'make your people follow your own example and turn their coats, that'll do it,' says he." And the old man laughed till his eyes swam. "What's become of them Kelletts?" added he, sharply.

"Ruined—sold out."

"To be sure, I remember all about it; and the young fellow—Paul was his name—where's he?"

"He's not so very young now," said Dunn, smiling; "he has a clerkship in the Customs; a poor place it is."

"I'm glad of it," said he, fiercely; "there was an old score between us—that's his father and me—and I knew I wouldn't die till it was settled."

"These are not kindly feelings, father," said Dunn, mildly.

"No; but they're natural ones, and that's as good," said the old man, with an energy that seemed to defy his age. "Where would I be now—where would you, if it was only kindness we thought of? There wasn't a man in all Ireland I wanted to be quits with so much as old Kellett of Kellett's Court; and you'd not wonder if you knew why; but I won't tell."

Davenport Dunn's cheek grew crimson and then deadly pale, but he never uttered a word.

"And what's more," continued the old man, energetically, "I'd pay the debt off to his children and his children's children with interest, if I could."

Still was the other silent; and the old man looked angry that he had not succeeded in stimulating the curiosity he had declared he would not gratify.

"Fate has done the work already, Sir," said Dunn, gravely. "Look where *we* are and where *they*!"

"That's true—that's true; we have a receipt in full for it all; but I'd like to show it to him; I'd like to say to him, 'Mr. Kellett, once upon a time, when my son there was a child——'"

"Father, father, these memories can neither make us wiser nor happier," broke in Dunn, in a voice of deep emotion. "Had I taken upon me to carry through life the burden of resentments, my back had been broken long ago, and from your own prudent counsels I learned that this could never lead to success. The men whom destiny has crushed are like bankrupt debtors, and to pursue them is but to squander your own resources."

The old man sat moodily, muttering indistinctly to himself, and evidently little moved by the words he had listened to.

"Are you going away already?" cried he, suddenly, as Dunn rose from his chair.

"Yes, Sir; I have a busy day before me to-morrow, and need some sleep to prepare for it."

"What will you be doing to-morrow, Davy?" asked the old man, while a bright gleam of pride lighted up his eyes and illuminated his whole face.

"I have deputations to receive—half a dozen at least. The Drainage Commission, too, will want me, and I must contrive to have half an hour for the Inland Navigation people; then the Attorney-General will call about these prosecutions, and I have not made up my mind about them; and the Castle folk will need some clue to my intentions about the new Secretary; there are some twenty provincial editors, besides, waiting for directions, not to speak of private and personal requests, some of which I must not refuse to hear. As to letters, three days won't get through them; so that you see, father, I do need a little rest beforehand."

"God bless you, my boy—God bless you, Davy," cried the old man, tenderly, grasping his hand in both his own. "Keep the head clear and trust nobody—that's the secret, trust nobody—the only mistakes I ever made in life was when I forgot that rule." And affectionately kissing him, the father dismissed his son, muttering blessings on him as he went.

CHAPTER XVI.

DAVIS VERSUS DUNN.

DAVENPORT DUNN had not exaggerated when he spoke of a busy day for the morrow. As early as eight o'clock was he at breakfast, and before nine the long back parlour, with its deep bay-window, was crowded like the waiting-room of a fashionable physician. Indeed, in the faces of anxiety, eagerness, and impatience of those assembled there, there was a resemblance. With a tact which natural shrewdness and long habit could alone confer, Mr. Clowes, the butler, knew exactly where each arrival should be introduced; and while Railway Directors, Bank Governors, and great Contractors indiscriminately crowded the large dining-room, Peers and Right Honourables filled the front drawing-room, the back one being reserved for Law Officers of the Crown, and such secret emissaries as came on special mission from the Castle. From the hall, crammed with frieze-coated countryfolk, to the little conservatory on the stairs, where a few ladies were grouped, every space was occupied. Either from previous acquaintance, or guided by the name of the visitor, Mr. Clowes had little difficulty in assigning him his fitting place, dropping, as he accompanied him, some few words, as the rank and station of the individual might warrant his addressing to him. "I'll let Mr. Dunn know your Lordship is here this instant, he is now just engaged with the Chief Baron.—He'll see you, Sir Samuel, next.—Mr. Wilcox, you have no chance for two hours, the Foyle deputation is just gone in.—You need scarcely wait to-day, Mr. Tobin, there are eighteen before you.—Colonel Craddock, you are to come on Saturday, and bring the plans with you.—Too late, Mr. Dean; his Grace the Archbishop waited till a quarter to eleven, the appointment is now for to-morrow at one.—No use in staying, my honest fellow, your own landlord couldn't see Mr. Dunn to day." In the

midst of such brief phrases as these, while he scattered hopes and disappointments about him, he suddenly paused to read a card, stealing a quick glance at the individual who presented it. "Mr. Annesley Beecher.' By appointment, Sir?"

"Well, I suppose I might say yes," muttered the visitor, while he turned to a short and very overdressed person at his side for counsel in the difficulty.

"To be sure—by appointment," said the other, confidently, while he bestowed on the butler a look of unmistakable defiance.

"And this—gentleman—is with you, Sir?" asked the butler, pausing ere he pronounced the designation. "Might I request to have his name?"

"Captain Davis," said the short man, interposing. "Write it under your own, Beecher."

While Mr. Annesley Beecher was thus occupied, and, sooth to say, it was an office he did not discharge with much despatch, Clowes had ample time to scan the appearance and style of the strangers.

"If you'll step this way, Sir," said Clowes, addressing Beecher only, "I'll send in your card at once." And he ushered them as he spoke into the thronged dinner-room, whose crowded company sat silent and moody, each man regarding his neighbour with a kind of reproachful expression, as though the especial cause of the long delay he was undergoing.

"You ought 'to tip' that flunkey, Beecher," said Davis, as soon as they were alone in a window.

"Haven't the tin, Master Grog!" said the other, laughing; while he added, in a lower voice, "do you know, Grog, I don't feel quite comfortable, here. Rather mixed company, ain't it, for a fellow who only goes out of a Sunday?"

"All safe," muttered Davis. "These are all bank directors, or railway swells. I wish we had the robbing of them!"

"Good deal of humbug about all this, ain't there?" whispered Beecher, as he threw his eyes over the crowded room.

"Of course there is," replied the other. "While he's keeping us all kicking our shins here, he's reading the *Times*, or gossiping with a friend, or weighing a double letter for the post. It was the dentists took up the dodge first, and the nobs followed them."

"I'm not going to stand it much longer, Grog. I tell you I don't feel comfortable."

"Stuff and nonsense. You don't fancy any of these chaps has a writ in his pocket, do you? Why, I can tell you every

man in the room. That little fellow, with the punch-coloured shorts, is Chairman of the Royal Canal Company. I know *him*, and he knows *me*. He had me 'up' about a roulette-table on board of one of the boats, and if it hadn't been for a trifling incident that occurred to his wife at Boulogne, where she went for the bathing, and which I broke to him in confidence—— But stay, he's coming over to speak to me."

"How d'ye do, Captain Davis?" said the stranger, with the air of a man resolved to brave a difficulty, while he threw into the manner a tone of haughty patronage.

"Pretty bobbish, Mr. Hailes; and *you*, the same I hope."

"Well, thank you. You never paid me that little visit you promised at Leixlip."

"I've been so busy of late; up to my ears, as they say. Going to start a new company, and thinking of asking your assistance, too."

"What's the nature of it?"

"Well, it's a kind of a mutual self-securing sort of thing against family accidents. You understand—a species of universal guarantee to ensure domestic peace and felicity—a thing that will come home to us all, and I only want a few good names in the direction, to give the shares a push."

Beecher looked imploringly, to try and restrain him; but he went on:

"May I take the liberty to put you down on the committee of management?"

Before any answer could come to this speech, Mr. Clowes called out, in a deep voice,

"Mr. Annesley Beecher and Captain Davis;" and flung wide the door for them to pass out.

"Why did you say that to him, Grog?" whispered Beecher, as they moved along.

"Just because I was watching the way he looked at me. He had a hardy, bold expression on his face that showed he needed a reminder, and so I gave him one. Always have the first blow when you see a fellow means to strike you."

Mr. Davenport Dunn rose as the visitors entered the room, and having motioned to them to be seated, took his place with his back to the fire, a significant intimation that he did not anticipate a lengthy interview. Whether it was that he had not previously settled in his own mind how to open the object of his visit, or that something in Dunn's manner and appearance, unlike what he anticipated, had changed his intention, but certain

is it that Beecher felt confused and embarrassed, and when reminded by Dunn's saying, "I am at your service, Sir," he turned a most imploring look towards Davis to come to his rescue. The Captain, however, with more tact, paid no attention to the appeal, and Beecher, with an immense effort, stammered out, "I have taken the liberty to call on you. I have come here to-day in consequence of a letter—that is, my brother, Lord Lackington—— You know my brother?"

"I have that honour, Sir."

"Well, in writing to me a few days back, he added a hurried postscript, saying he had just seen you; that you were then starting for Ireland, where, on your arrival, it would be well I should wait upon you at once."

"Did his Lordship mention with what object, Sir?"

"I can't exactly say that he did. He said something about your being his man of business, thoroughly acquainted with all his affairs, and so, of course, I expected—I believed, at least—that you might be able to lead the way—to show me the line of country, as one might call it," added he, with a desperate attempt to regain his ease, by recurring to his favourite phraseology.

"Really, Sir, my engagements are so numerous, that I have to throw myself on the kindness of those who favour me with a call to explain the object of their visit."

"I haven't got Lackington's letter about me, but if I remember aright, all he said was, 'See Dunn as soon as you can, and he'll put you up to a thing or two,' or words to that effect."

"I regret deeply, Sir, that the expressions give me no clue to the matter in hand."

"If this ain't fencing, my name isn't Davis," said Grog, breaking in. "You know well, without any going about the bush, what he comes about; and all this skirmishing is only to see if he's as well 'up' as yourself in his own business. Now then, no more chaff, but go in at once."

"May I ask who is this gentleman?"

"A friend—a very particular friend of mine," said Beecher, quickly. "Captain Davis."

"Captain Davis," repeated Dunn, in a half voice to himself, as if to assist his memory to some effort—"Captain Davis."

"Just so," said Grog, defiantly—"Captain Davis."

"Does his Lordship's letter mention I should have the honour of a call from Captain Davis, Sir?"

"No; but as he's my own intimate friend—a gentleman who possesses all my confidence—I thought, indeed I felt, the impor-

tance of having his advice upon any questions that might arise in this interview."

"I'm afraid, Sir, you have subjected your friend to a most unprofitable inconvenience."

"The match postponed till further notice," whispered Grog.

"I beg pardon, Sir," said Dunn, not overhearing the remark.

"I was a saying that no race would come off to day, in consequence of the inclemency of the weather," said Grog, as he adjusted his shirt collar.

"Am I to conclude, then," said Beecher, "that you have not any communication to make to me?"

"No you ain't," broke in Grog, quickly. "He don't like me, that's all, and he hasn't the manliness to say it."

"On the contrary, Sir, I feel all the advantage of your presence on this occasion—all the benefit of that straightforward manner of putting the question, which saves us so much valuable time."

Grog bowed an acknowledgment of the compliment, but with a grin on his face, that showed in what spirit he accepted it.

"Lord Lackington did not speak to you about my allowance?" asked Beecher, losing all patience.

"No, Sir, not a word."

"He did not allude to a notion—he did not mention a plan—he did not discuss people called O'Reilly, did he?" asked he, growing more and more confused and embarrassed.

"Not a syllable, with reference to such a name, escaped him, Sir."

"Don't you see," said Grog, rising, "that you'll have to look for the explanation to the second column of the *Times*, where 'A. B. will hear something to his advantage, if he calls without C. D.'"

Davenport Dunn paid no attention to this remark, but stood calmly impassive before them.

"It comes to this, then, that Lackington has been hoaxing me," said Beecher, rising, with an expression of ill-temper on his face.

"I should rather suggest another possibility," said Dunn, politely; "that, knowing how far his Lordship has graciously reposed his own confidence in me, he has generously extended to me the chance of obtaining the same position of trust on the part of his brother—an honour I am most ambitious to attain. If you are disengaged on Sunday next," added he, in a low

voice, "and would favour me with your company at dinner, alone—quite alone——"

Beecher bowed an assent in silence, casting a cautious glance towards Davis, who was scanning the contents of the morning paper.

"Till then," muttered Dunn, while he added aloud, "A good morning;" and bowed them both to the door.

"Well, you are a soft 'un, there's no denying it," said Davis, as they gained the street.

"What d'ye mean?" cried Beecher, angrily.

"Why don't you see how you spoiled all? I'd have had the whole story out of him, but you wouldn't give me time to 'work the oracle.' He only wanted to show us how cunning he was—that he was deep, and all that; and when he saw that we were all wonder and amazement about his shrewdness, then, he'd have gone to business."

"Not a bit of it, Master Grog; that fellow's wide awake, I tell you."

"So much the worse for *you* then, that's all."

"Why so?"

"Because you're a going to dine with him on Sunday next, all alone. I heard it, though you didn't think I was listening, and I saw the look that passed, too, as much as to say, 'We'll not have that fellow;' and that's the reason I say, 'So much the worse for you.'"

"Why, what can he do, with all his craft? He can't make me put my name to paper; and if he did, much good would it do him."

"*You* can't make running against the like of him," said Grog, contemptuously. "He has an eye in his head like a dog-fox. *You've* no chance with him. He couldn't double on *me*—he'd not try it; but he'll play *you* like a trout in a fishpond."

"What if I send him an excuse, then—shall I do that?"

"No. You must go, if it was only to show that you suspect nothing; but keep your eyes open; watch the ropes, and come over to me when the 'heat is run.'"

And with this counsel they parted.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE "PENSIONNAT GODARDE."

LET us ask our reader to turn for a brief space from these scenes and these actors, and accompany us to that rich plain which stretches to the north-west of Brussels, and where, on the slope of the gentle hill, beneath the Royal Palace of Lacken, stands a most picturesque old house, known as the Château of the Three Fountains. The very type of a château of the Low Countries, from its gabled fronts, all covered with festooned rhododendron, to its trim gardens, peopled with leaden deities, and ornamented by the three fountains to which it owes its name, nothing was wanting. From the plump little figure who blew his trumpet on the weather vane, to the gaudily gilded pleasure-boat that peeped from amidst the tall water-lilies of the fish-pond, all proclaimed the peculiar taste of a people who loved to make nature artificial, and see the instincts of their own quaint natures reproduced in every copse and hedgerow around them.

All the little queer contrivances of Dutch ingenuity were there—mock shrubs, which blossomed as you touched a spring; jets, that spurted out as you trod on a certain spot: wooden figures, worked by mechanisms, lowered the drawbridge to let you pass; nor was the toll-keeper forgotten, who touched his cap in salutation. Who were they who had designed all these pleasant conceits, and what fate had fallen on their descendants, we know not. At the time we speak of, the château was a select Pensionnat for ten young ladies, presided over by Madame Godarde, "of whom all particulars might be learned at Cadel's Library, Old Bond-street, or by personal application to the Rev. Pierre Faucher, Evangelical Minister, Adam-street, Strand, London. It was, as we have said, select—the most select of Pensionnats. The ten young ladies were chosen after investigations

the most scrutinising; the conditions of the admission verged on the impossible. The mistress realised in her person all the rare attributes of an elevated rank and a rigid Protestantism, while the educational programme was little short of a fellowship course. Just as being a Guardsman is supposed to confer a certain credit over a man's outset in life, it was meant that being an *élève* of Madame Godarde should enter the world with a due and becoming *prestige*; for, while the range of acquirements included something at least from every branch of human science, the real superiority and strength of the establishment lay in the moral culture observed there; and as the female teachers were selected from amongst the models of the sex, the male instructors were warranted as having triumphed over temptations not inferior to St. Anthony's. The ritual of the establishment well responded to all the difficulties of admission. It was almost conventual in strictness; and even to the uniform dress worn by the pupils there was much that recalled the nunnery. The quiet uniformity of an unbroken existence, the changeless fashion of each day's life, impressed even young and buoyant hearts, and toned down to seriousness spirits that nature had formed to be light and joyous. One by one, they who had entered there underwent this change; a little longer might be the struggle with some, the end was alike to all; nay, not to all! there was one whose temperament resisted to the last, and who, after three years of the durance, was just as unbroken in spirit, just as high in heart, just as gay, as when she first crossed the threshold. Gifted with one of those elastic natures which rise against every pressure, she accepted every hardship as the occasion for fresh resource, and met each new infliction, whether it were a severe task, or even punishment, with a high-hearted resolve not to be vanquished. There was nothing in her appearance that indicated this hardihood: she was a fair, slight girl, whose features were feminine almost to childishness. The grey-blue eyes, shaded with deep lashes; the beautifully formed mouth, on which a half saucy smile so often played; a half timid expression conveyed in the ever-changing colour of her cheek, suggested the expression of a highly impressionable and undecided nature; yet this frail, delicate girl, whose bird-like voice reminded one of childhood, swayed and ruled all her companions. She added to these personal graces abilities of a high order. Skilled in every accomplishment, she danced, and sang, and drew, and played better than her fellows; she spoke several modern languages fluently, and even caught up their local

dialects with a quickness quite marvellous. She could warble the Venetian barcarole with all the soft accents of an Adriatic tongue, or sing the Bauerlied of the Tyrol with every cadence of the peasant's fancy. With a memory so retentive that she could generally repeat what she had once read over attentively, she had powers of mimicry that enabled her to produce at will everything noticeable that crossed her. A vivid fancy, too, threw its glittering light over all these faculties, so that even the common-place incidents of daily life grouped themselves dramatically in her mind, and events the least striking were made the origin of situation and sentiment, brilliant with wit and poetry.

Great as all these advantages were, they were aided, and not inconsiderably, by other and adventitious ones. She was reputed to be a great heiress. How, and when, and why this credit attached to her, it were hard to say; assuredly she had never given it any impulse. She spoke, indeed, constantly of her father—her only living relation—as of one who never grudged her any indulgence, and she showed her schoolfellows the handsome presents which from time to time he sent her; these in their costliness—so unlike the gifts common to her age—may possibly have assisted the belief in her great wealth. But however founded, the impression prevailed that she was to be the possessor of millions, and in the course of destiny, to be what her companions called her in jest—a Princess.

Nor did the designation seem ill applied. Of all the traits her nature exhibited, none seemed so conspicuous as that of "birth." The admixture of timidity and haughtiness, that blended gentleness with an air of command, a certain instinctive acceptance of whatever deference was shown her as a matter of right and due, all spoke of "blood;" and her walk, her voice, her slightest gesture, were in keeping with this impression. Even they who liked her least, and were most jealous of her fascination, never called her Princess in any mockery. No, strange enough, the title was employed with all the significance of respect, and as such did she receive it.

If it were not that, in her capricious moods, Nature has moulded stranger counterfeits than this, we might incur some risk of incredulity from our reader when we say that the Princess was no other than Grog Davis's daughter!

Davis had been a man of stratagems from his very beginning in life. All his gains had been acquired by dexterity and trick. Whatever he had accomplished was won as at a game where

some other paid the loss. His mind, consequently, fashioned itself to the condition in which he lived, and sharpness, and shrewdness, and over-reaching seemed to him not alone the only elements of success, but the only qualities worth honouring. He had seen honesty and imbecility so often in company, that he thought them convertible terms; and yet this man—"Leg," outcast, knave that he was—rose above all the realities of a life of roguery in one aspiration—to educate his child in purity, to screen her from the contamination of his own set, to bring her up amongst all the refining influences of care and culture, and make her, as he said to himself, "the equal of the best lady in the land!" To place her amongst the well-born and wealthy, to have her where her origin could not be traced, where no clue would connect her with himself, had cost him a greater exercise of ingenuity than the deepest scheme he had ever plotted on the Turf. That exchange of references on which Madame Godarde's exclusiveness so peremptorily insisted was only to be met at heavy cost. The distinguished baronet who stood sponsor to Grog Davis's respectability received cash for the least promising of promissory notes in return, and the lady who waited on Madame Godarde in her brougham "to make acquaintance with the person who was to have charge of her young relative," was the distracted mother of a foolish young man who had given bills to Davis for several thousands, and who, by this special mission, obtained possession of the documents. In addition to these direct, there were many other indirect sacrifices. Grog was obliged for a season to forego all the habits and profits of his daily life, to live in a sort of respectable seclusion, his servants in mourning, and himself in the deepest sable for the loss of a wife who had died twelve years before. In fact, he had to take out a species of moral naturalisation, the details of which seemed interminable, and served to convince him that respectability was not the easy, indolent thing he had hitherto imagined it.

If Davis had been called on to furnish a debtor and creditor account of the transaction, the sum spent in the accomplishment of this feat would have astonished his assignee. As he said himself, "Fifteen hundred wouldn't see him through it." It is but fair to say that the amount so represented comprised the very worst of bad debts, but Grog cared little for that; his theory was that there wasn't the difference between a guinea and a pound in the best bill from Baring's and the worst paper in Holywell-street. "You can always get either your money or

your money's worth," said he, "and very frequently the last is the better of the two."

If it was a proud day for the father as he consigned his daughter to Madame Godarde's care, it was no less a happy one for Lizzy Davis, as she found herself in the midst of companions of her own age, and surrounded with all the occupations and appliances of a life of elegance. Brought up from infancy in a small school in a retired part of Cornwall, she had only known her father during the two or three off months of that probationary course of respectability we have alluded to. With all his affection for his child, and every desire to give it utterance, Davis was so conscious of his own defects in education, and the blemishes which his tone of mind and thought would inevitably exhibit, that he had to preserve a sort of estrangement towards her, and guard himself against whatever might prejudice him in her esteem. If, then, by a thousand acts of kindness and liberality he gained on her affection, there was that in his cold and distant manner that as totally repelled all confidence. To escape from the dull uniformity of that dreary home, where a visitor never entered, nor any intercourse with the world was maintained, to a scene redolent of life, with gay, light-hearted associates, all pursuing the same sunny paths, to engage her brilliant faculties in a variety of congenial pursuits wherein there was only so much of difficulty as inspired zeal, to enter on an existence wherein each day imparted the sense of new acquirement, was a happiness that verged on ecstasy. It needed not all the flatteries that surrounded her to make this seem a paradise; but she had these, too, and in so many ways. Some loved her light-heartedness, and that gay spirit that floated like an atmosphere about her; others praised her gracefulness and her beauty; some preferred to these, those versatile gifts of mind that gave her the mastery over whatever she desired to learn; and there were those who dwelt on the great fortune she was to have, and the great destiny that awaited her.

How often in the sportive levity of happy girlhood had they asked her what life she should choose for herself—what station, and what land to live in. They questioned her in all sincerity, believing she had but to wish, to have the existence that pleased her. Then what tender caresses followed! what flattering entreaties that the dear Princess would not forget Josephine, or Gertrude, or Julia, in the days of her greatness, but would recognise those who had been her loved schoolfellows years before!

"What a touchstone of your tact will it be, Lizzy, when you're

Duchess," said one, "to meet one of us in a watering-place, or on a steam-boat, and to explain, delicately enough not to hurt us, to his Grace the Duke that you knew us as girls, and how provoking if you should call me Jane or Clara!"

"And then the charming condescension of your inquiry if we were married, though a half-bashful and an awkward-looking man should be standing by at our interview, waiting to be presented, and afraid to be spoken to. Or worse than that, the long, terrible pauses in conversation, which show how afraid you are lest we should tumble into reminiscences."

"Oh, Lizzy, darling," cried another, "do be a Duchess for a moment, and show how you would treat us all. It would be charming."

"You seem to be forgetting, Mesdames," said she, haughtily, "what an upstart you are making of me. This wondrous elevation, which is at once to make me forget my friends and myself, does not present to my eyes the same dazzling effect. In fact, I can imagine myself a Duchess to-morrow without losing either my self-respect or my memory."

"Daisy, dearest, do not be angry with us," cried one, addressing her by the pet name which they best loved to call her.

"I am rather angry with myself that I should leave no better impression behind me. Yes," added she, in a tone of sadness, "I am going away."

"Oh, darling Lizzy—oh, Daisy, don't say so," broke out so many voices together.

"Too true! dearest friends," said she, throwing her arms around those nearest to her. "I only learned it this morning. Madame Godarde came to my room to say papa had written for me, and would come over to fetch me in about a fortnight. I ought doubtless to be so happy at the prospect of going home; but I have no mother—I have not either brother or sister; and here, amidst you, I have every tie that can attach the heart. When shall I ever live again amidst such loving hearts?—when shall life be the happy dream I have felt it here?"

"But think of us, Daisy, forlorn and deserted," cried one, sobbing.

"Yes, Lizzy," broke in another, "imagine the day-by-day disappointments that will break on us as we discover that this pleasure or that spot owed its charm to you—that it was your voice made the air melody—your accents gave the words their feeling! Fancy us as we find out—as find out we must—that the affection we bore you bound us into one sisterhood——"

"Oh!" burst Lizzy in, "do let me carry away some of my heart to him who should have it all, and make not my last moments with you too painful to bear. Remember, too, that it is but a passing separation; we can and we will write to each other. I'll never weary of hearing all about you and this dear spot. There's not a rosebud opening to the morning air but will bring some fragrance to my heart; and that dear old window! how often shall I sit at it in fancy, and look over the fair plain before us. Bethink you, too, that I am only the first launched into that wide ocean of life where we are all to meet hereafter."

"And be the dear, dear friends we now are," cried another. And so they hung upon her neck and kissed her, bathing her soft tresses with their tears, and indulging in all the rapture of that sorrow no ecstasy of joy can equal.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SOME DOINGS OF MR. DRISCOLL.

"THERE it is, Bella," said Kellett, as he entered the cottage at nightfall, and threw a sealed letter on the table. "I hadn't the courage to open it. A fellow came into the office and said, 'Is one Kellett here? This is a letter from Mr. Davenport Dunn.' *He* was Mister, and *I* was *one* Kellett. Wasn't I low enough when I couldn't say a word to it?—wasn't I down in the world when I had to bear it in silence?"

"Shall I read it for you?" said she, gently.

"Do, darling; but before you begin, give me a glass of whisky-and-water. I want courage for it, and something tells me, Bella, I'll need courage too."

"Come, come, papa, this is not like yourself; this is not the old Albuera spirit you are so justly proud of."

"Five-and-thirty years' hard struggling with the world never improved a man's pluck. There wasn't a fellow in the Buffs had more life in him than Paul Kellett. It was in general orders never to sell my traps or camp furniture when I was reported missing; for, as General Pack said, 'Kellett is sure to turn up to-morrow, or the day after.' And look at me now!" cried he, bitterly; "and as to selling me out, they don't show me much mercy, Bella, do they?"

She made no reply, but slowly proceeded to break the seal of the letter.

"What a hurry ye're in to read bad news," cried he, peevishly; "can't you wait till I finish this?" And he pointed to the glass, which he sipped slowly, like one wishing to linger over it.

A half-melancholy smile was all her answer, and he went on:

"I'm as sure of what's in that letter there as if I read it. Now, mark my words, and I'll just tell you the contents of it.

Kellett's Court is sold, the first sale confirmed, and the Master's report on your poor mother's charge is unfavourable. There's not a perch of the old estate left us, and we're neither more nor less than beggars. There it is for you in plain English."

"Let us learn the worst at once, then," said she, resolutely, as she opened the letter.

"Who told you that was the worst?" broke he in, angrily. "The worst isn't over for the felon in the dock when the Judge has finished the sentence, there's the 'drop' to come, after that."

"Father, father!" cried she, pitifully, "be yourself again. Remember what you said the other night, that if we had poor Jack back again you'd not be afraid to face life in some new world beyond the seas, and care little for hardships or humble fortune if we could only be together."

"I was dreaming, I suppose," muttered he, doggedly.

"No; you were speaking out of the fulness of your love and affection; you were showing me how little the accidents of fortune touch the happiness of those resolved to walk humbly, and that once divested of that repining spirit which was ever recalling the past, we should confront the life before us more light of heart than we have felt for many a year."

"I wonder what put it in my head," muttered he, in the same despondent tone.

"Your own stout heart put it there. You were recalling what young Conway was telling us about poor Jack's plans and projects; and how, when the war was over, he'd get the Sultan to grant him a patch of land close to the Bosphorus, where he'd build a little kiosk for us all, and we'd grow our own corn and have our own vines and fig-trees, seeking for nothing but what our own industry should give us."

"Dreams, dreams!" said he, sighing drearily. "You may read the letter now." And she began:

"SIR,—By direction of Mr. Davenport Dunn, I have to acquaint you that the Commissioners, having overruled the objections submitted by him, will on Tuesday next proceed to the sale of the lands of Kellett's Court, Gorestown, and Kilmaganny, free of all charges and encumbrances thereon, whether by marriage settlement——"

"I told you—that's just what I was saying," burst in Kellett; "there's not sixpence left us!"

She ran hurriedly over to herself the tiresome intricacies that followed, till she came to the end, where a brief postscript ran :

"As your name is amongst those to be reduced in consequence of the late Treasury order regarding the Customs, Mr. Dunn hopes you will lose no time in providing yourself with another employment, to which end he will willingly contribute any aid in his power."

A wild, hysterical burst of laughter broke from Kellett as she ceased.

"Isn't there any more good news, Bella? Look over it carefully, darling, and you'll surely discover something else."

The terrible expression of his face shocked her, and she could make no reply.

"I'll wager a crown, if you search well, you'll see something about sending me to gaol, or, maybe, transporting me.—Who's that knocking at the door there?" cried he, angrily, as a very loud noise resounded through the little cottage.

"'Tis a gentleman without wants to speak to the master," said the old woman, entering.

"I'm engaged, and can't see anybody," rejoined Kellett, sternly.

"He says it's the same if he could see Miss Bella," reiterated the old woman.

"He can't, then; she's engaged too."

The woman still lingered at the door, as if she expected some change of purpose.

"Don't you hear me?—don't you understand what I said?" cried he, passionately.

"Tell him that your master cannot see him," said Bella.

"If I don't make too bould—if it's not too free of me—maybe you'd excuse the liberty I'm taking," said a man, holding the door slightly open, and projecting a round bullet head and a very red face into the room.

"Oh, Mr. Driscoll," cried Bella. "Mrs. Hawkshaw's brother, papa," whispered she, quietly to her father, who, notwithstanding the announcement, made no sign.

"If Captain Kellett would pardon my intrusion," said Driscoll, entering with a most submissive air, "he'd soon see that it was at last with good intentions I came out all the way here on foot, and a bad night besides—a nasty little drizzling rain and mud—such mud!" And he held up in evidence a foot about the size of an elephant's.

"Pray sit down, Mr. Driscoll," said Bella, placing a chair for him. "Papa was engaged with matters of business when you knocked—some letters of consequence."

"Yes, Miss, to be sure, and didn't want to be disturbed," said Driscoll, as he sat down, and wiped his heated forehead. "I'm often the same way myself: but when I'm at home, and want nobody to disturb me, I put on a little brown-paper cap I have, and that's the sign no one's to talk to me."

Kellett burst into a laugh at the conceit, and Driscoll so artfully joined in the emotion, that when it ceased they were already on terms of intimacy.

"You see what a strange crayture I am. God help me," said Driscoll, sighing. "I have to try as many dodges with myself as others does be using with the world, for my poor head goes wanderin' away about this, that, and the other, and I'm never sure it will think of what I want."

"That's a sad case," said Kellett, compassionately.

"I was like everybody else till I had the fever," continued Driscoll, confidentially. "It was the spotted fever, not the scarlet fever, d'ye mind; and when I came out of it on the twenty-ninth day, I was the same as a child, simple and innocent. You'd laugh now if I told you what I did with the first half-crown I got. I bought a bag of marbles!"

And Kellett did laugh heartily; less, perhaps, at the circumstance than at the manner and look of him who told it.

"Ay, faith, marbles!" muttered Driscoll to himself; "'tis a game I'm mighty fond of."

"Will you take a little whisky-and-water? Hot or cold?" asked Kellett, courteously.

"Just a taste, to take off the deadness of the water," said Driscoll. "I'm obleeged to be as cautious as if I was walkin' on eggs. Dr. Dodd says to me, 'Terry,' says he, 'you had never much brains in your best days, but now you're only a sheet of thin paper removed from an idiot, and if you touch spirits it's all up with you.'"

"That was plain speaking, anyhow," said Kellett, smiling.

"Yes," said Driscoll, while he seemed struggling to call up some reminiscence; and then, having succeeded, said, "ay, 'There's five-and-twenty in Swift's this minute,' said he, 'with their heads shaved, and in blue cotton dressing-gowns, more sensible than yourself.' But, you see, there was one thing in my favour, I was always harmless."

The compassionate expression with which Kellett listened to

this declaration guaranteed how completely the speaker had engaged his sympathy.

"Well, well," continued Driscoll, "maybe I'm just as happy, ay, happier than ever I was! Every one is kind and good-natured to me now. Nobody takes offence at what I say or do; they know well in their hearts that I don't mean any harm."

"That you don't," broke in Bella, whose gratitude for many a passing word of kindness, as he met her of a morning, willingly seized upon the opportunity for acknowledgment.

"My daughter has often told me of the kind way you always spoke to her."

"Think of that, now," muttered Terry to himself; "and I saying all the while to my own heart, 'Tis a proud man you ought to be to-day, Terry Driscoll, to be giving 'Good morning' to Miss Kellett of Kellett's Court, the best ould blood in your own county.'"

"Your health, Driscoll—your health," cried Kellett, warmly. "Let your head be where it will, your heart's in the right place, anyhow."

"Do you say so, now?" asked he, with all the eagerness of one putting a most anxious question.

"I do, and I'd swear it," cried Kellett, resolutely. "'Tis too clever and too 'cute the world's grown; they were better times when there was more good feeling and less learning."

"Indeed—indeed, it was the remark I made to my sister Mary the night before last," broke in Driscoll. "'What is there,' says I, 'that Miss Kellett can't teach them? they know the rule of three and What's-his-name's Questions as well as I know my prayers. You don't want them to learn mensuration and the use of the globes?' 'I'll send them to a school in France,' says she; 'it's the only way to be genteel.'"

"To a school in France?" cried Bella; "and is that really determined on?"

"Yes, Miss; they're to go immediately, and ye see that was the reason I walked out here in the rain to-night. I said to myself, 'Terry,' says I, 'they'll never say a word about this to Miss Kellett till the quarter is up; be off, now, and break it to her at once.'"

"It was so like your own kind heart," burst out Bella.

"Yes," muttered Driscoll, as if in a reverie, "that's the only good o' me now, I can think of what will be of use to others."

"Didn't I tell you we were in a vein of good luck, Bella?"

said Kellett, between his teeth; "didn't I say awhile ago there was more coming?"

"But," says I to Mary," continued Driscoll, "'you must take care to recommend Miss Kellett among your friends——'"

Kellett dashed his glass down with such force on the table as to frighten Driscoll, whose speech was thus abruptly cut short, and the two men sat staring fixedly at each other. The expression of poor Terry's vacant face, in which a struggling effort to deprecate anger was the solitary emotion readable, so overcame Kellett's passion, that, stooping over, he grasped the other's hand warmly, and said,

"You're a kind-hearted creature, and you'd never hurt a living soul. I'm not angry with you."

"Thank you, Captain Kellett—thank you," cried the other, hurriedly, and wiped his brow, like one vainly endeavouring to follow out a chain of thought collectedly. "Who is this told me that you had another daughter?"

"No," said Kellett; "I have a son."

"Ay, to be sure! so it was a son, they said, and a fine strapping young fellow, too. Where is he?"

"He's with his regiment, the Rifles, in the Crimea."

"Dear me, now, to think of that,—fighting the French just the way his father did."

"No," said Kellett, smiling, "it's the Russians he's fighting, and the French are helping him to do it."

"That's better any day," said Driscoll; "two to one is a pleasanter match. And so he's in the Rifles?" And here he laid his head on his hand and seemed lost in thought. "Is he a captain?" asked he, after a long pause.

"No, not yet," said Kellett, while his cheek flushed at the evasion he was practising.

"Well, maybe he will soon," resumed the other, relapsing once more into deep thought. "There was a young fellow joined them in Cork just before they sailed, and I lent him thirty shillings, and he never paid me. I wonder what became of him? Maybe he's killed."

"Just as likely," said Kellett, carelessly.

"Now, would your son be able to make him out for me?—not for the sake of the money, for I wouldn't speak of it, but out of regard for him, for I took a liking to him; he was a fine, handsome fellow, and bold as a lion."

"He mightn't be in Jack's battalion, or he might, and Jack not know him. What was his name?" said Kellett, in some confusion.

"I'll tell you if you'll pledge your word you'll never say a syllable about the money, for I can't think but he forgot it."

"I'll never breathe a word about it."

"And will you ask your son all about him—if he likes the service, or if he'd rather be at home, and how it agrees with him?"

"And the name?"

"The name?—I wrote it down on a bit of paper just for my own memory's sake, for I forget everything—the name is Conway—Charles Conway."

"Why, that's the very——" When he got so far, a warning look from Bella arrested Kellett's voice, and he ceased speaking, looking eagerly at his daughter for some explanation. Had he not been so anxious for some clue to her meaning, he could scarcely have failed to be struck by the intense keenness of the glance Driscoll turned from the countenance of the father to that of the daughter. She, however marked it, and with such significance, that a deathlike sickness crept suddenly over her, and she sank slowly down into a seat.

"You were saying, 'That's the very——'" said Driscoll, repeating the words, and waiting for the conclusion.

"The very name we read in a newspaper," said Bella, who, with a sort of vague instinct of some necessity for concealment, at once gave this evasive reply: "He volunteered for somewhere, or was first inside a battery, or did something or other very courageous."

"It wasn't killed he was?" said Driscoll, in his habitual tone.

"No, no," cried Kellett, "he was all safe."

"Isn't it a queer thing? but I'd like to hear of him! There was some Conways connexions of my mother's, and I can't get it out of my head but he might be one of them. It's not a common name, like Driscoll."

"Well, Jack will, maybe, be able to tell you about him," said Kellett, still under the spell of Bella's caution.

"If you would tell me on what points you want to be informed," said Bella, "I shall be writing to my brother in a day or two. Are there any distinct questions you wish to be answered?"

The calm but searching glance that accompanied these few words gradually gave way to an expression of pity as Bella gazed at the hopeless imbecility of poor Driscoll's face, wherein not a gleam of intelligence now lingered. It was as if the little struggle of intellect had so exhausted him that he was incapable

of any further effort of reason. And there he sat, waiting till the returning tide of thought should flow back upon his stranded intelligence.

"Would you like him to be questioned about the family?" said she, looking good-naturedly at him.

"Yes, Miss—yes," said he half dreamily; "that is, I wouldn't like my own name, poor creature as I am, to be mentioned, but if you could anyways find out if he was one of the Conways of Abergedley—they were my mother's people—if you could find out that for me, it would be a great comfort."

"I'll charge myself with the commission," said Bella, writing down the words "Conway of Abergedley."

"Now there was something else, if my poor head could only remember it," said Driscoll, whose countenance displayed the most complete picture of a puzzled intelligence.

"Mix yourself another tumbler, and you'll think of it by-and-by," said Kellett, courteously.

"Yes," muttered Driscoll, accepting the suggestion at once. "It was something about mustard-seed, I think," added he, after a pause; "they say it will keep fresh for two years if you put it in a blue paper bag—deep blue is best." A look of sincere compassion passed between Kellett and his daughter, and Driscoll went on—"I don't think it was that, though I wanted to remember." And he fell into deep reflection for several minutes, at the end of which he started abruptly up, finished off his glass, and began to button up his coat in preparation for the road.

"Don't go till I see what the night looks like," cried Kellett, as he left the room to examine the state of the weather.

"If I should be fortunate enough to obtain any information, how shall I communicate with you?" asked Bella, addressing him hastily, as if to profit by the moment of their being alone.

Driscoll looked fixedly at her for a second or two, and gradually the expression of his face settled down into its habitual cast of unmeaning imbecility, while he merely muttered to himself, "No evidence—throw out the bills."

She repeated her question, and in a voice to show that she believed herself well understood.

"Yes!" said he, with a vacant grin—"yes! but they don't agree with everybody."

"There's a bit of a moon out now, and the rain has stopped," said Kellett, entering, "so that it wouldn't be friendly to detain you."

"Good night, good night," said Driscoll, hurriedly; "that spirit is got up to my head. I feel it. A pleasant journey to you both, and be sure to remember me to Mrs. Miller." And with these incoherent words he hastened away, and his voice was soon heard singing cheerily, as he plodded his way towards Dublin.

"That's the greatest affliction of all," said Kellett, as he sat down and sipped his glass. "There's nothing like having one's faculties, one's reason, clear and unclouded. I wouldn't be like that poor fellow there to be as rich as the Duke of Leinster."

"It is a strange condition," said Bella, thoughtfully. "There were moments when his eyes lighted up with a peculiar significance, as if at intervals his mind had regained all its wonted vigour. Did you remark that?"

"Indeed I did not. I saw nothing of the kind," said Kellett, peevishly. "By the way, why were you so cautious about Conway?"

"Just because he begged that his name might not be mentioned. He said that some trifling debts were still hanging over him, from his former extravagance; and though all in course of liquidation, he dreaded the importunate appeals of creditors, so certain to pour in if they heard of his being in Dublin."

"Every one has his troubles!" muttered Kellett, as he sank into a moody reflection over his own, and sipped his liquor in silence.

Let us now follow Driscoll, who, having turned the corner of the lane, out of earshot of the cottage, suddenly ceased his song and walked briskly along towards town. Rapidly as he walked, his lips moved more rapidly still, as he maintained a kind of conversation with himself, bursting out from time to time with a laugh, as some peculiar conceit amused him. "To be sure, a connexion by the mother's side," said he. "One has a right to ask after his own relations! And for all I know, my grandmother was a Conway. The ould fool was so near pokin' his foot in it, and letting out that he knew him well. She's a deep one, that daughter; and it was a bould stroke the way she spoke to me when we were alone. It was just as much as to say, 'Terry, put your cards down, for I know your hand.' 'No, Miss,' says I, 'I've a thrump in the heel of my fist that ye never set eyes on. Ha, ha, ha!' but she's deep for all that—mighty deep; and if it was safe, I wish we had her in the plot!

Ay! but is it safe, Mr. Driscoll? By the virtue of your oath, Terry Driscoll, do you belave she wouldn't turn on you? She's a fine-looking girl, too," added he, after an interval. "I wish I knew her sweetheart, for she surely has one. Terry, Terry, ye must bestir yourself; ye must be up early and go to bed late, my boy. You're not the man ye were before ye had that 'faver'—that spotted faver!"—Here he laughed till his eyes ran over. "What a poor crayture it has left ye—no memory—no head for anything!" And he actually shook with laughter at the thought. "Poor Terry Driscoll, ye are to be pitied!" said he, as he wiped the tears from his face. "Isn't it a sin and a shame there's no one to look after ye?"

CHAPTER XIX.

DRISCOLL IN CONFERENCE.

"Not come in yet, Sir, but he is sure to be back soon," said Mr. Clowes, the butler, to Terry Driscoll, as he stood in the hall of Mr. Davenport Dunn's house, about eleven o'clock of the same night we have spoken of in our last chapter.

"You're expecting him, then?" asked Driscoll, in his own humble manner.

"Yes, Sir," said Clowes, looking at his watch; "he ought to be here now. We have a deal of business to get through to-night, and several appointments to keep; but he'll see you, Mr. Driscoll. He always gives directions to admit *you* at once."

"Does he really?" asked Driscoll, with an air of perfect innocence.

"Yes," said Clowes, in a tone at once easy and patronising, "he likes *you*. You are one of the very few who can amuse him. Indeed, I don't think I ever heard him laugh, what I'd call a hearty laugh, except when you're with him."

"Isn't that quare now!" exclaimed Driscoll. "Lord knows it's little fun is in me now!"

"Come in and take a chair—charge you nothing for the sitting," said Clowes, laughing at his own smartness as he led the way into a most comfortably furnished little room which formed his own sanctum.

The walls were decorated with coloured prints and drawings of great projected enterprises—peat fuel manufactories of splendid pretensions, American packet stations on the west coast, of almost regal architecture, vied with ground plans of public parks and ornamental model farms; fish-curing institutions, and smelting-houses, and beetroot sugar-buildings, graced scenes of the very wildest desolation, and, by an active representation

of life and movement, seemed to typify the wealth and prosperity which enterprise was sure to carry into regions the very dreariest and least promising.

"A fine thing that, Mr. Driscoll," said Clowes, as Terry stood admiring a large and highly-coloured plate, wherein several steam-engines were employed in supplying mill-streams with water from a vast lake, while thousands of people seemed busily engaged in spade labour on its borders. "That is the 'Lough Corrib Drainage and Fresh Strawberry Company,' capital eight hundred thousand pounds! Chemical analysis has discovered that the soil of drained lands, treated with a suitable admixture of the alkaline carbonates, is peculiarly favourable to the growth of the strawberry—a fruit whose properties are only now receiving their proper estimate. The strawberry, you are, perhaps, not aware, is a great anti-scorbutic. Six strawberries, taken in a glass of diluted malic acid of a morning, fasting, would restore the health of those fine fellows we are now daily losing in such numbers in the Crimea. I mean, of course, a regular treatment of three months of this regimen, with due attention to diet, cleanliness, and habit of exercise—all predisposing elements removed—all causes of mental anxiety withdrawn. To this humane discovery this great industrial speculation owes its origin. There, you see the engines at full work; the lake is in process of being drained, the water being all utilised by the mills you see yonder, some of which are compressing the strawberry pulp into a paste for exportation. Here, are the people planting the shoots; those men in blue, with the watering-pots, are the alkaline feeders, who supply the plant with the chemical preparation I mentioned, the strength being duly marked by letters, as you see. B. C. P. means bi-carbonate of potash; S. C. S., sub-carbonate of soda; and so on. Already, Sir," said he, raising his voice, "we have contracts for the supply of twenty-eight tons a week, and we hope," added he, with a tremulous fervour in his voice, "to live to see the time when the table of the poorest peasant in the land will be graced by the health-conducing condiment."

"With all my heart and soul I wish you success," said Driscoll; while he muttered under his breath what sounded like a fervid prayer for the realisation of this blessed hope.

"Of that we are pretty certain, Sir," said Clowes, pompously; "the shares are now one hundred and twelve—paid up in two calls, thirty-six pounds ten shillings. He," said Clowes, with a jerk of his thumb towards Mr. Dunn's room meant to indicate

its owner—"he don't like it, calls it a bubble, and all that, but I have known him mistaken, Sir—ay, and more than once. You may remember that vein of yellow marble—giallo antico, they call it—found on Martin's property—— That's his knock; here he comes now," cried he, hurrying away to meet his master, and leaving the story of his blunder unrelated. "All right," said Clowes, re-entering, hastily; "you can go in now. He seems in a precious humour to-night," added he, in a low whisper; "something or other has gone wrong with him."

Driscoll had scarcely closed the inner door of cloth that formed the last security of Davenport Dunn's privacy, when he perceived the correctness of Mr. Clowes's information. Dunn's brow was dark and clouded, his face slightly flushed, and his eye restless and excited.

"What is it so very pressing, Driscoll, that couldn't wait till to-morrow?" said he, peevishly, and not paying the slightest attention to the other's courteous salutation.

"I thought this was the time you liked best," said Driscoll, quietly; "you always said, 'Come to me when I've done for the day——,'"

"But who told you I had done for the day? That pile of letters has yet to be answered—many of them I have not even read. The Attorney-General will be here in a few minutes about these prosecutions, too."

"That's a piece of good luck, anyhow," said Driscoll, quickly.

"How so? What d'ye mean?"

"Why, we could just get a kind of travelling opinion out of him about this case."

"What nonsense you talk," said Dunn, angrily; "as if a lawyer of standing and ability would commit himself by pronouncing on a most complicated question, the details of which he was to gather from *you*!" The look and emphasis that accompanied the last word were to the last degree insulting, but they seemed to give no offence whatever to him to whom they were addressed; on the contrary, he met them with a twinkle of the eye, and a droll twist of the mouth, as he mustered half to himself:

"Yes, God help me, I'll never set the Liffey on fire!"

"You might, though, if you had it heavily insured," said Dunn, with a savage irony in his manner that might well have provoked rejoinder; but Driscoll was proof against whatever he didn't want to resent, and laughed pleasantly at the sarcasm.

"You were dining at the Lodge, I suppose, to-day?" asked he, eager to get the conversation afloat at any cost.

"No, at Luscombe's—the Chief Secretary's," said Dunn, curtly.

"They say he's a clever fellow," said Driscoll.

"They are heartily welcome to this opinion who think so," broke in Dunn, peevishly. "Let them call him a fortunate one if they like, and they'll be nearer the mark.—What of this affair?" said he, at last. "Have you found out Conway?"

"No, but I learned that he dined and passed the evening with ould Paul Kellett. He came over to Ireland to bring him some news of his son, who served in the same regiment, and so I went out to Kellett to pump them; but for some reason or other they're as close as wax. The daughter beats all ever you saw! she tried a great stroke of cunning with me, but it wouldn't do."

"It was your poor head and the spotted fever—eh?" said Dunn, laughing.

"Yes," said Driscoll; "I never was rightly myself since that." And he laughed heartily.

"This is too slow for me, Driscoll; you must find out the young fellow at once, and let me see him. I have read over the statement again, and it is wonderfully complete. Hatchard has it now before him, and will give me his opinion by Sunday next. On that same day Mr. Beecher is to dine with me; now if you could manage to have Conway here on Monday morning, I'd probably be in a condition to treat openly with him."

"You're going too fast—too fast entirely," said Driscoll; "sure if Conway sees the road before him, he may just thravel it without us at all."

"I'll take care he shall not know which path to take, Driscoll; trust me for that. Remember that the documents we have are all-essential to him. Before he sees one of them our terms must be agreed on."

"I'll have ten thousand paid down on the nail. 'Tis eight years I am collectin' them papers. I bought that shooting-lodge at Banthry, that belonged to the Beechers, just to search the old cupboard in the dinner-room. It was plastered over for fifty years, and Denis Magrath was the only man living knew where it was."

"I'm aware of all that. The discovery—if such it prove—was all your own, Driscoll; and as to the money remuneration, I'll not defraud you of a sixpence."

"There was twelve hundred pounds," continued Driscoll, too full of his own train of thought to think of anything else, "for a wretched ould place with the roof fallin' in, and every stack of it rotten! Eight years last Michaelmas—that's money, let me tell you! and I never got more than thirty pounds any year out of it since."

"You shall be paid, and handsomely paid."

"Yes," said Terry, nodding.

"You can have good terms on either side."

"Yes, or a little from both," added Driscoll, dryly.

CHAPTER XX.

AN EVENING WITH GROG DAVIS.

It was late at night, and Grog Davis sat alone by a solitary candle in his dreary room. The fire had long burned out, and great pools of wet, driven by the beating rain through the rickety sashes, soaked the ragged carpet that covered the floor, while frequent gusts of storm scattered the slates, and shook the foundations of the frail building.

To all seeming, he paid little attention to the poor and comfortless features of the spot. A short square bottle of Hollands, and a paper of coarse cigars beside him, seemed to offer sufficient defence against such cares, while he gave up his mind to some intricate problem which he was working out with a pack of cards. He dealt, and shuffled, and dealt again, with marvellous rapidity. There was that in each motion of the wrist, in every movement of the finger, that bespoke practised manipulation, and a glance quick as lightning on the board was enough to show him how the game fared.

"Passed twelve times," muttered he to himself, then added aloud, "Make your game, gentlemen, make your game. The game is made. Red, thirty-two. Now for it, Grog, man or a mouse, my boy. Mouse it is! by ——" cried he, with an infamous oath. "Red wins! Confound the cards!" cried he, dashing them on the floor. "Two minutes ago I had enough to live on, the rest of my days. I appeal to any man in the room," said he, with a look of peculiar defiance around him, "if he ever saw such ill luck! There's not another fellow breathing ever got it like me!" And as he spoke, he arose and walked up and down the chamber, frowning savagely, and turning glances of insolent meaning on every side of him. At last, approaching the table, he filled out a glass of gin and drank it off, and then, stooping down, he gathered up the cards and reseated himself. "Take you fifty on the first ace," cried he, addressing an

imaginary better, while he began to deal out the cards in two separate heaps. "Won!" exclaimed he, delightedly. "Go you double or quits, Sir—Any gentleman with another fifty?—A pony if you like, Sir?—Done! Won again, by jingo! This is the only game, after all—decided in a second. I make the bank, gentlemen, two hundred in the bank. Why, where are the bettors this evening? This is only punting, gentlemen. Any one say five hundred—four—three—one hundred—for the first knave?" And the cards fell from his hands with wondrous rapidity. "Now, if no one is inclined to play, let's have a broiled bone," said he, rising, and bowing courteously around him.

"Second the motion!" cried a cheery voice, as the door opened and Annesley Beecher entered. "Why, Grog, my hearty, I thought you had a regular flock of pigeons here. I heard you talking as I came up the stairs, and fancied you were doing a smart stroke of work."

"What robbery have *you* been at with that white choker and that gimcrack waistcoat?" said Davis, sulkily.

"Dining with Dunn, and a capital dinner he gave me. I'm puzzled to say whether I like his wine or his cookery best."

"Were there many there?"

"None but ourselves."

"Lord! how he must have worked you!" cried Davis, with an insolent grin.

"Ain't such a flat as you think me, Master Grog. Solomon was a wise man, and Samson a strong one, and A. B. can hold his own with most 'in the ruck.'"

A most contemptuous look was the only answer Davis condescended to this speech. At last, after he had lighted a fresh cigar, and puffed it into full work, he said, "Well, what was it he had to say to you?"

"Oh, we talked away of everything; and, by Jupiter! he knows a little of everything. Such a memory, too; remembers every fellow that was in power the last fifty years, and can tell you how he was 'squared,' for it's all on the 'cross' with *them*, Grog, just as in the ring. Every fellow rides to order, and half the running one sees is no race! Any hot water to be had?"

"No, there's cold in that jug yonder. Well, go on with Dunn."

"He is very agreeable, I must say; for, besides having met everybody, he knows all their secret history. How this one got out of his scrape, and why that went into the hole. You see in

a moment how much he must be trusted, and that he can make his book on life as safe as the Bank of England. Fearfully strong that gin is!"

"No, it ain't," said Grog, rudely; "it's not the velvety tippie Dunn gave you, but it's good British gin, that's what it is."

"You wouldn't believe, too, how much he knows about women! He's up to everything that's going on in town. Very strange that, for a fellow like him, Don't you think so?"

Davis made no answer, but puffed away slowly. "And after women, what came next?"

"He talked next—let me see—about books. How he likes Becky Sharp—how he enjoys her! He says that character will do the same service as the published discovery of some popular fraud; and that the whole race of Beckys now are detected swindlers—nothing less."

"And what if they are; is that going to prevent their cheating? Hasn't the world always its crop of flats coming out in succession like green peas? What did he turn to after that?"

"Then we had a little about the turf."

"He don't know anything about the turf!" said Grog, with intense contempt.

"I'm not so sure of that," said Beecher, cautiously.

"Did he speak of *me* at all?" said Grog, with a peculiar grin.

"No; only to ask if you were the same Captain Davis that was mentioned in that affair at Brighton."

"And what did you say?"

"Said! Not knowing couldn't tell, Master Grog. Knew you were a great friend of my brother Lackington's, and always hand and glove with Blanchard and the swells."

"And how did he take that?"

"Said something about two of the same name, and changed the subject."

Davis drew near the table, and taking up the cards began to shuffle them slowly like one seeking some excuse for a moment of uninterrupted reflection. "I've found out the way that Yankee fellow does the king," said he, at last. "It's not the common bridge that everybody knows. It's a Mississippi touch, and a very neat one. Cut them now wherever you like."

Beecher cut the cards with all due care, and leaned eagerly over the table.

"King of diamonds!" cried Grog, slapping the card on the board.

"Do it again," said Beecher, admiringly; and once more Davis performed the dexterous feat.

"It's a nick!" cried Beecher, examining the edge of the card minutely.

"It ain't no such thing!" said Davis, angrily. "I'd give you ten years to find it out, and twenty to do it, and you'd fail in both."

"Let's see the dodge, Grog," said Beecher, half coaxingly.

"You don't see *my* hand till you put *yours* on the table," said Davis, fiercely. Then crossing his arms before him, and fixing his red fiery eyes on Beecher's face, he went on: "What do you mean by this fencing—just tell me what you mean by it?"

"I don't understand you," said Beecher, whose features were now of ashy paleness.

"Then you shall understand me!" cried Davis, with an oath. "Do you want me to believe that Dunn had you to dine with him all alone—just to talk about politics of which you know nothing, or books of which you know less. That he'd give you four precious hours of a Sunday evening to hear your opinions about men or women, or things in general. Do you ask me to swallow that, Sir?"

"I ask you to swallow nothing," stammered out Beecher, in whose heart pride and fear were struggling for the mastery. "I have told you what we spoke of; if anything else passed between us, perhaps it was of a private and personal nature; perhaps it referred to family topics; perhaps I might have given a solemn assurance not to reveal the subject of it to any one."

"You did—did you?" said Davis, with a sneer.

"I said, perhaps I might have done so. I didn't say I had."

"And so you think—you fancy—that you're a going to double on me," said Davis, rising, and advancing towards him with a sort of insulting menace. "Now, look here, my name ain't Davis but if ever you try it—try it, I say, because as to doing it, I dare you to your face—but if you just try it, twelve hours won't pass over till the dock of a police-court is graced by the Honourable Annesley Beecher on a charge of forgery."

"Oh, Davis!" cried Beecher, as he placed his hands over the other's lips, and glanced in terror through the room. "There never was anything I didn't tell you—you're the only man breathing that knows me."

"And I do know you, by Heaven, I do!" cried the other, savagely; "and I know you'd sneak out of my hands to-morrow,

if you dared; but this I tell you, when you leave *mine* it will be to exchange into the turnkey's. You fancy that because I see you are a fool that I don't suspect you to be a crafty one. Ah! what a mistake you make there!"

"But listen to me, Grog—just hear me."

"My name's Davis, Sir—Captain Davis—let me hear you call me anything else!"

"Well, Davis, old fellow—the best and truest friend ever fellow had in the world—now what's all this about? I'll tell you every syllable that passed between Dunn and myself. I'll give you my oath, as solemnly as you can dictate it to me, not to conceal one word. He made me swear never to mention it. It was *he* that imposed the condition on me. What he said was this: 'It's a case where you need no counsel, and where any counsel would be dangerous. He who once knows your secret will be in a position to dictate to you. Lord Lackington must be your only adviser, since his peril is the same as your own.'"

"Go on," said Davis, sternly, as the other seemed to pause too long.

Beecher drew a long breath, and, in a voice faint and broken, continued: "It's a claimant to the title—a fellow who pretends he derives from the elder branch—the Conway Beechers. All stuff and nonsense—they were extinct two hundred years ago—but no matter, the claim is there, and so circumstantially got up, and so backed by documents and the rest of it, that Lackington is frightened—frightened out of his wits. The mere exposure, the very rumour of the thing, would distract *him*. He's proud as Lucifer—and then he's hard up; besides, he wants a loan, and Dunn tells him there's no getting it till this affair is disposed of, and that he has hit on the way to do it."

"As how?" said Davis, dryly.

"Well," resumed Beecher, whose utterance grew weaker and less audible at every word, "Lackington, you know, has no children. It's very unlikely he ever will, now; and Dunn's advice is, that for a life interest in the title and estates I should bind myself not to marry. That fellow then, if he can make good his claim, comes in as next of kin after *me*; and as to who or what comes after *me*," cried he, with more energy, "it matters devilish little. Once 'toes up,' and Annesley Beecher won't fret over the next match that comes off—eh Grog, old fellow?" And he endeavoured by a forced jocularly to encourage his own sinking heart.

"Here's a shindy!" said Grog, as he mixed himself a fresh

tumbler and laid his arms crosswise on the table; "and so it's no less than the whole stakes is on this match?"

"Title and all," chimed in Beecher.

"I wasn't thinking of the title," said Grog, gruffly, as he relapsed into a moody silence. "Now, what does my Lord say to it all?" asked he, after a long pause.

"Lackington?—Lackington says nothing, or next to nothing. You read the passage in his letter where he says, 'Call on Dunn,' or 'speak to Dunn,' or something like that—he didn't even explain about what; and then you may remember the foolish figure we cut on that morning we waited on Dunn ourselves, not being able to say why or how we were there."

"I remember nothing about cutting a foolish figure anywhere, or any time. It's not very much *my* habit. It ain't *my* way of business."

"Well, I can't say as much," said Beecher, laughing; "and I own frankly I never felt less at ease in my life."

"That's *your* way of business," said Grog, nodding gravely at him.

"Every fellow isn't born as sharp as you, Davis. Samson was a wise man—no, Solomon was a wise man——"

"Leave Samson and Solomon where they are," said Grog, puffing his cigar. "What we have to look to here, is, whether there be a claim at all, and then what it's worth. The whole affair may be just a cross between this fellow Dunn and one of his own pals. Now it's my Lord's business to see to that. You are only the *second* horse all this while. If my Lord knows that he can be disqualified, he's wide awake enough to square the match, he is. But it may be that Dunn hasn't put the thing fairly before him. Well, then, you must compare your book with my Lord's. You'll have to go over to him, Beecher." And the last words were uttered with a solemnity that showed they were the result of a deep deliberation.

"It's all very well, Master Davis, to talk of going over to Italy; but where's the tin to come from?"

"It must be had somehow," said Davis, sententiously. "Ain't there any fellows about would give you a name to a bit of stiff, at thirty-one days' date?"

"Pumped them all dry long ago!" said Beecher, laughing. "There's not a man in the garrison would join me to spoil a stamp; and, as to the civilians, I scarcely know one who isn't a creditor already."

"You are always talking to me of a fellow called Kellett—why not have a shv at him?"

"Poor Paul!" cried Beecher, with a hearty laugh. "Why, Paul Kellett's ruined—cleaned out—sold in the Encumbered what-d'ye-call-'ems, and hasn't a cross in the world!"

"I ought to have guessed as much," growled out Grog, "or he'd not have been on such friendly terms with *you*."

"A polite speech that, Grog," said Beecher, smiling.

"It's true, and that's better," said Davis. "The only fellows that stick close to a man in his poverty are those a little poorer than himself."

"Not but if he had it," said Beecher, following up his own thoughts—"not but if he had it, he's just the fellow to do a right good-natured thing."

"Well, I suppose he's got his name—they haven't sold *that*, have they?"

"No; but it's very much like the estate," said Beecher. "It's far too heavily charged ever to pay off the encumbrances."

"Who mind's that, now-a-days? A bad bill is a very useful thing sometimes. It's like a gun warranted to burst, and you can always manage to have it in the right man's hands when it comes the time for the explosion."

"You *are* a rum 'un, Davis—you *are*, indeed," said Beecher, admiringly; for it was in the delivery of such wise maxims that Davis appeared to him truly great.

"Get him down for fifty—that ain't much—fifty at three months. My Lord says he'll stand fifty himself, in that letter I read. It was to help you to a match, to be sure; but that don't matter. There can be no question of marrying now. Let me see how this affair is going to turn. Well, I'll see if I can't do something myself. I've a precious lot of stamped paper there" and he pointed to an old secretary—"if I could hit upon a sharp fellow to work it."

"You are a trump, Grog!" cried Beecher, delightedly.

"If we had a clear two hundred, we could start to-morrow," said Grog, laying down his cigar, and staring steadfastly at him.

"Why, would *you* come, too?" muttered Beecher, who had never so much as imagined the possibility of this companionship on the Continent.

"I expect I would," said Davis, with a very peculiar grin. "It ain't likely you'd manage an affair like this without advice."

"Very true—very true," said Beecher, hurriedly. "But remember, Lackington is my brother—we're both in the same boat."

"But not with the same skulls," said Grog. And he grinned a savage grin at the success of his pun.

Beecher, however, so far from appreciating the wit, only understood the remark as a sneer at his intelligence, and half sulkily said,

"Oh! I'm quite accustomed to that, now—I don't mind it."

"That's right—keep your temper," said Grog, calmly; "that's the best thing in *your* book. You're what they call good-tempered. And," added he, in the moralising tone, "though the world does take liberties with the good-tempered fellows, it shies them many a stray favour—many a sly five-pun'-note into the bargain. I've known fellows go through life—and make a rare good thing of it, too—with no other stock-in-trade than this same good temper."

Beecher did not pay his habitual attention to Grog's words, but sat pondering over all the possible and impossible objections to a tour in such company. There were times and places where men might be seen talking to such a man as Davis. The betting-ring and the weighing-stand have their privileges, just like the green-room or the "flats," but in neither case are the intimacies of such localities exactly of a kind for parade before the world. Of all the perils of such a course none knew better than Beecher. What society would think—what clubs would say of it—he could picture to his mind at once.

Now, there were very few of life's casualties of which the Honourable Annesley Beecher had not tasted. He knew what it was to have his bills protested, his chattels seized, his person arrested; he had been browbeaten by Bankruptcy Commissioners, and bullied by sheriffs' officers; tradesmen had refused him credit; tailors abjured his custom; he had "burned his fingers" in one or two not very creditable transactions; but still, with all this, there was yet one depth to which he had not descended—he was never seen in public with a "wrong man." He had a jerk of the head, a wink, or a glance for the Leg who met him in Piccadilly, as every one else had. If he saw him in the garden of the Star and Garter, or the Park at Greenwich, he might even condescend to banter him on "looking jolly," and ask what new "robbery" he was in for; but as to descending to intimacy or companionship openly before the gaze of the world, he'd as soon have thought of playing cad to a 'bus, or sweep at a crossing.

It was true the Continent was not Hyde Park—the most strait-laced and well-conducted did fifty things there, they had never ventured on at home. Foreign travel had its licence, and a passport was a sort of plenary indulgence for many a social

transgression ; but, with all this, there were a few names—about half a dozen in all Europe—that no man could afford to link his own along with.

As for Grog, he was known everywhere. From Ostend to Odessa his fame extended, and there was scarcely a police prefect in the travelled districts of the Continent who had not a description of his person, and some secret instructions respecting him. From many of the smaller states, whose vigilance is in the ratio of their littleness, he was rigidly excluded ; so that in his journeying through Europe, he was often reduced to a zig-zag and erratic procedure, not unlike the game known to schoolboys as scotch-hop. In the ten minutes—it was not more—that Beecher passed in recalling these and like facts to his memory, his mind grew more and more perplexed ; nor was the embarrassment unperceived by him who caused it. As Davis sipped and smoked, he stole frequent glances at his companion's face, and strove to read what was passing in his mind. "It may be," thought Grog, "he doesn't see his way to raising the money. It may be that his credit is lower in the market than I fancied ; or"—and now his fiery eyes grew fiercer and his lip more tense—"or it may be that he doesn't fancy *my* company. If I was only sure it was *that*," muttered he between his teeth ; and had Annesley Beecher only chanced to look at him as he said it, the expression of that face would have left a legacy of fear behind it for many a day.

"Help yourself," said Grog, passing the bottle across the table—"help yourself, and the gin will help you, for I see you are 'pounded.'"

"Pounded ? no, not a bit ; nothing of the kind," said Beecher, blushing. "I was thinking how Lackington would take all this ; what my Lady would say to it ; whether they'd regard it seriously ; or whether they'd laugh at my coming out so far about nothing."

"They'll not laugh, depend on't ; take my word for it, they won't laugh," said Davis, dryly.

"Well, but if it all comes to nothing—if it be only a plant to extort money ?"

"Even that ain't anything to laugh at," said Davis. "I've done a little that way myself, and yet I never saw the fellow who was amused by it."

"So that you really think I ought to go out and see my brother ?"

"I'm sure and certain that we must go," said Davis, just giving the very faintest emphasis to the "we."

"But it will cost a pot of money, Grog, even though I should travel in the cheapest way—I mean, the cheapest way possible for a fellow as well known as I am."

This was a bold stroke; it was meant to imply far more than the mere words announced. It was intended to express a very complicated argument in a mere innuendo.

"That's all gammon," said Grog, rudely. "We don't live in an age of couriers and extra-post; every man travels by rail now-a-days, and nobody cares whether you take a coupé or a horse-box; and as to being known, so am I, and almost as well known as most fellows going."

This was pretty plain speaking; and Beecher well knew that Davis's frankness was always on the verge of the only one thing that was worse than frankness.

"After all," said Beecher, after a pause, "let the journey be ever so necessary, I haven't got the money."

"I know you haven't, neither have I; but we shall get it somehow. You'll have to try Kellett; you'll have to try Dunn himself, perhaps. I don't see why you shouldn't start with him; *he* knows that you ought to confer with my Lord; and he could scarce refuse your note at three months, if you made it—say—fifty."

"But, Grog," said Beecher, laying down his cigar, and nerveing himself for a great effort of cool courage, "what would suffice fairly enough for one, would be a very sorry allowance for two; and as the whole of my business will be with my own brother—where of necessity I must be alone with him—don't you agree with me that a third person would only embarrass matters rather than advance them?"

"No!" said Grog, sternly, while he puffed his cigar in measured time.

"I'm speaking," said Beecher, in a tone of apology—"I'm speaking, remember, from my knowledge of Lackington; he's very high and very proud; one of those fellows who 'take on' even with their equals; and with myself, he never forgets to let me feel I'm a younger brother."

"He wouldn't take any airs with *me*," said Grog, insolently. And Beecher grew actually sick at the bare thought of such a meeting.

"I tell you frankly, Davis," said he, with the daring of despair, "it wouldn't do. It would spoil all. First and foremost Lackington would never forgive me for having confided this secret to any one. He'd say, and not unfairly either, 'What

has Davis to do with this? It's not the kind of case he is accustomed to deal with; his counsel couldn't possibly be essential here.' *He* doesn't know," added he, rapidly, "your consummate knowledge of the world; *he* hasn't seen, as I have, how keenly you read every fellow that comes before you."

"We start on Monday," said Grog, abruptly, as he threw the end of his cigar into the fire; "so stir yourself, and see about the bills."

Beecher arose and walked the room with hurried strides, his brow growing darker and his face more menacing at every moment.

"Look here, Davis," cried he, turning suddenly round and facing the other, "you assume to treat me as if I was a—schoolboy;" and it was evident that he had intended a stronger word, but had not courage to utter it, for Davis's wicked eyes were upon him, and a bitter grin of irony was already on Grog's mouth as he said,

"Did you ever try a round with *me* without getting the worst of it? Do you remember any time where you came well out of it? You've been mauled once or twice somewhat roughly, but with the gloves on—always with the gloves on. Now, take my advice, and don't drive me to take them off—don't! You never felt my knuckles yet—and, by the Lord Harry, if you had, you'd not call out 'encore.'"

"You just want to bully me," said Beecher, in a whimpering tone.

"Bully you—bully *you*!" said Davis, and his features put on a look of the most intense scorn as he spoke. "Egad!" cried he, with an insolent laugh, "you know very little about either of us."

"I'd rather you do your worst at once than keep threatening me in this fashion."

"No you wouldn't; no—no—nothing of the kind," said Davis, with a mockery of gentleness in his voice and manner.

"May I be hanged if I would not!" cried Beecher, passionately.

"It ain't hanging now—they've made it transportation," said Davis, with a grin; "and them as has tried it says the old way was easiest." And in the slang style of the last words there was a terrible significance—it was as though a voice from the felons' dock was uttering a word of warning. Such was the effect on Beecher, that he sank slowly down into a seat, silent and powerless.

"If you hadn't been in this uncommon high style to-night," said Grog, quietly, "I'd have told you some excellent reasons for what I was advising. I got a letter from Spicer this morning. He, and a foreign fellow he calls Count Lienstahl—it sounds devilish like 'lie and steal,' don't it?—have got a very pretty plant together, and if they could only chance upon a good second-rate horse, they reckon about eight or ten hundred in stakes alone this coming spring. They offer me a share if I could come out to them, and mean to open the campaign at Brussels. Now, there's a thing to suit us all—'picking for every one,' as they say in the oakum-sheds."

"Cochin China might be had for five hundred; or there's Spotted Snake, they want to sell him for anything he'll bring," said Beecher, with animation.

"They could manage five hundred at least, Spicer says. We're good for about twelve thousand francs, which ought to get us what we're looking for."

"There's Anchovy Paste——"

"Broke down before and behind."

"Hop the Twig, own sister to Levanter; ran second for the Colchester Cup——"

"Mares don't answer abroad."

"Well, what do you say to Mumps?"

"There's the horse for the Continent. A great heavy-headed, thick-jawed beast, with lazy action, and capped hocks. He's the animal to walk into a foreign jockey club. Oh, if we had him!"

"I know where he is!" exclaimed Beecher, in ecstasy. "There's a Brummagem fellow driving him through Wales—a bagman—and he takes him a turn now and then for the county stakes that offer. I'll lay my head on't we get him for fifty pounds."

"Come, old fellow," said Grog, encouragingly, "you *have* your wits about you, after all. Breakfast here to-morrow, about twelve o'clock, and we'll see if we can't arrange the whole affair. It's a sure five hundred apiece, as if we had it here;" and he slapped his pockets as he spoke.

Beecher shook his friend's hand with a warmth that showed all his wonted cordiality, and with a hearty "Good night!" they separated.

Grog had managed cleverly. He had done something by terror, and the rest he had accomplished by temptation. They were the two only impulses to sway that strange temperament.

CHAPTER XXI.

"A DARK DAY."

It was the day appointed for the sale of Kellett's Court, and a considerable crowd was assembled to witness the proceeding. Property was rapidly changing hands; new names were springing up in every county, and old ones were growing obsolete. Had the tide of conquest and confiscation flowed over the land, a greater social revolution could not have resulted; and, while many were full of hope and confidence that a new prosperity was about to dawn upon Ireland, there were some who continued to deplore the extinction of the old names, and the exile of the old families, whose traditions were part of the history of the country.

Kellett's Court was one of those great mansions which the Irish gentlemen of a past age were so given to building, totally forgetting how great the disproportion was between their house and their rent-roll. Irregular, incongruous, and inelegant, it yet, by its very size and extent, possessed a certain air of grandeur. Eighty guests had sat down to table in that oak-wainscoted dinner-room; above a hundred had been accommodated with beds beneath that roof; the stables had stalls for every hunting-man that came; and the servants' hall was a great galleried chamber, like the refectory of a convent, in everything save the moderation of the fare.

Many were curious to know who would purchase an estate burdened by so costly a residence, the very maintenance of which in repair constituted a heavy annual outlay. The gardens, long neglected and forgotten, occupied three acres, and were themselves a source of immense expense; a considerable portion of the demesne was so purely ornamental that it yielded little or no profit; and, as an evidence of the tastes and habits of its former

owners, the ruins of a stand house marked out where races once were held in the park, while hurdle fences and deep drains even yet disfigured the swelling lawn.

Who was to buy such a property was the question none could answer. The house, indeed, might be converted into a "Union," if its locality suited; it was strong enough for a gaol—it was roomy enough for a nunnery. Some averred the Government had decided on purchasing it for a barrack; others pretended that the sisterhood of the Sacred Heart had already made their bargain for it; yet to these and many other assertions not less confidently uttered there were as many demurrers.

While rumours and contradictions were still buzzed about, the Commissioner took his place on the bench, and the clerk of the Court began that tedious recital of the circumstances of the estate with whose details all the interested were already familiar, and the mere curious cared not to listen to. An informality on a former day had interfered with the sale, a fact which the Commissioner alluded to with satisfaction, as property had risen largely in value in the interval, and he now hoped that the estate would not alone clear off all the charges against it, but realise something for its former owner. A confused murmur of conversation followed this announcement. Men talked in knots and groups—consulted maps and rent-rolls—made hasty calculations in pencil—whispered secretly together, muttering frequently the words "Griffith," "plantation measure," "drainage," and "copyhold," and then, in a half-hurried, half-wearied way, the Court asked "Is there no bidding after twenty-seven thousand five hundred?"

"Twenty-eight!" said a deep voice near the door.

A long, dreary pause followed, and the sale was over.

"Twenty-eight thousand!" cried Lord Glengariff; "the house alone cost fifty."

"It's only the demesne, my Lord," said some one near; "it's not the estate is sold."

"I know it, Sir; but the demesne contains eight hundred acres, fully wooded, and enclosed by a wall.—Who is it for, Dunn?" asked he, turning to that gentleman.

"In trust, my Lord," was the reply.

"Of that I am aware, Sir; you have said as much to the Court."

Dunn bent over and whispered some words in his ear.

"Indeed!" exclaimed the other, with evident astonishment; "and intending to reside?" added he.

"Eventually, I expect so," said Dunn, cautiously, as others were now attending to the conversation.

Again Lord Glengariff spoke, but, ere he had finished, a strange movement of confusion in the body of the Court interrupted him, while a voice hoarse with passionate meaning cried out, "Is the robbery over?—is it done?" and a large, powerful man, his face flushed, and his eyes glaring wildly, advanced through the crowd to the railing beneath the bench. His waistcoat was open, and he held his cravat in one hand, having torn it off in the violence of his excitement.

"Who is this man?" asked the Commissioner, sternly.

"I'll tell you who I am—Paul Kellett, of Kellett's Court, the owner of that house and estate you and your rascally miscreants have just stolen from me. Ay, stolen is the word—law or justice have nothing to do with it. Your Parliament made it law, to be sure, to pamper your Manchester upstarts who want to turn gentlemen——"

"Does any one know him?—has he no friends who will look after him?" said the Commissioner, leaning over and addressing those beneath in a subdued voice.

"Devil a friend in the world! It's few friends stick to the man whose property comes here. But don't make me out mad. I'm in my full senses, though I had enough to turn fifty men to madness."

"I know him, my Lord; with the permission of the Court, I'll take charge of him," said Dunn, in a tone so low as to be audible only to a few. Kellett, however, was one of them, and he immediately cried out,

"Take charge of me! Ay, that he will. He took charge of my estate, too, and he'll do by me what he did with the property—give a bargain of me!"

A hearty burst of laughter filled the hall at this sally, for Dunn was one of those men whose prosperity always warrants the indulgence of a sarcasm. The Court, however, could no longer brook the indecorous interruption, and sternly ordered that Kellett might be removed.

"My dear Mr. Kellett, pray remember yourself; only recollect where you are; such conduct will only expose you——"

"Expose me! do you think I've any shame left in me? Do you think, when a man is turned out to starve on the roads, that he cares much what people say of him?"

"This interruption is intolerable," said the Commissioner. "If he be not speedily removed, I'll order him into the custody of the police."

"Do, in God's name," cried Kellett calmly. "Anything that will keep me from laying hands on myself, or somebody else, will be a charity."

"Come with me, Kellett—do come along with me?" said Dunn, entreatingly.

"Not a step—not an inch. It was going with *you* brought me here. This man, my Lord," cried he, addressing the Court with a wild earnestness—"this man said to me that this was the time to sell a property—that land was rising every day—that if we came into the Court now, it's not twenty, nor twenty-five, but thirty years' purchase——"

"I am sorry, Sir," said the Commissioner, sternly, "that you will give me no alternative but that of committing you; such continued disrespect of Court cannot longer be borne."

"I'm as well in gaol as anywhere else. You've robbed me of my property, I care little for my person. I'll never believe it's law—never! You may sit up with your wig, and your ushers, and your criers, but you are just a set of thieves and swindlers, neither more nor less. Talk of shame, indeed! I think some of yourselves might blush at what you're doing. There, there, I'm not going to resist you," said he to the policeman; "there's no need of roughness. Newgate is the best place for me now. Mind," added he, turning to where the reporters for the daily press were sitting—"mind and say that I just offered a calm protest against the injustice done me—that I was civilly remonstrating with the Court upon what every man——"

Ere he could finish, he was quietly removed from the spot, and before the excitement of the scene had subsided, he was driving away rapidly towards Newgate.

"Drunk or mad—which was it?" said Lord Glengariff to Davenport Dunn, whose manner was scarcely as composed as usual.

"He has been drinking, but not to drunkenness," said Dunn, cautiously. "He is certainly to be pitied." And now he drew nigh the bench and whispered a few words to the Commissioner.

Whatever it was that he urged—and there was an air of entreaty in his manner—did not seem to meet the concurrence of the judge. Dunn pleaded earnestly, however, and at last the Commissioner said, "Let him be brought up to-morrow then, and having made a suitable apology to the Court, we will discharge him." Thus ended the incident, and once more the Clerk resumed his monotonous readings. Townlands and baronies were described, valuations quoted, rights of turbary defined, and

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an ancient squirearchy sold out of their possessions with as little commotion or excitement as a mock Claude is knocked down at Christie's. Indeed, of so little moment was the scene we have mentioned deemed, that scarcely half a dozen lines of the morning papers were given to its recital. The Court and its doings were evidently popular with the country at large, and one of the paragraphs which readers read with most pleasure, was that wherein it was recorded that estates of immense value had just changed owners, and that the Commissioner had disposed of so many thousands' worth of landed property within the week.

Sweeping measures of whatever nature they be, have always been in favour with the masses; never was any legislation so popular as the Guillotine!

Evening was closing in, the gloomy ending of a gloomy day in winter, and Sybella Kellett sat at the window anxiously watching for her father's return. The last two days had been passed by her in a state of feverish uneasiness. Since her father's attendance at the custom-house ceased—for he had been formally dismissed at the beginning of the week—his manner had exhibited strange alternations of wild excitement and deep depression. At times he would move hurriedly about, talking rapidly, sometimes singing to himself, at others, he would sit in a state of torpor for hours. He drank, too, affecting some passing pain or some uneasiness as an excuse for the whisky-bottle, and when gently remonstrated with on the evil consequences, became fearfully passionate and excited. "I suppose I'll be called a drunkard next—there's nothing more likely than I'll be told it was my own sottish habits brought all this ruin upon me. 'He's a sot'—'He's never sober'—'Ask his own daughter about him.'" And then, stimulating himself, he would become furious with rage. As constantly, too, did he inveigh against Dunn, saying that it was he that ruined him, and that had he not listened to his treacherous counsels, he might have arranged matters with his creditors. From these bursts of passion he would fall into moods of deepest melancholy, accusing his own folly and recklessness as the cause of all his misfortunes, and even pushing self-condemnation so far as to assert that it was his misconduct and waste had driven poor Jack from home and made him enlist as a soldier.

Bella could not but see that his intellect was affected and his judgment impaired, and she made innumerable pretexts to be ever near him. Now, she pretended that she required air and

exercise, that her spirits were low, and needed companionship. Then, she affected to have little purchases to make in town, and asked him to bear her company. At length he showed a restlessness under this restraint that obliged her to relax it; he even dropped chance words as if he suspected that he was the object of some unusual care and supervision. "There's no need of watching me," said he rudely to her on the morning that preceded the sale; "I'm in no want of a keeper. They'll see Paul Kellett's not the man to quail under any calamity—the same to-day, to-morrow, and the next day. Sell him out or buy him in, and you'll never know by his face that he felt it."

He spoke very little on that morning, and scarcely tasted his breakfast. His dress was more careful than usual, and Bella, half by way of saying something, asked if he were going into Dublin.

"Into Dublin! I suppose I am indeed," said he, curtly, as though giving a very obvious reply. "Maybe," added he, after a few minutes—"maybe you forget this is the seventeenth, and that this is the day for the sale."

"I did remember it," said she, with a faint sigh, but not daring to ask how his presence there was needed.

"And you were going to say," added he, with a bitter smile, "what did that matter to *me*, and that *I* wasn't wanted. Neither I am—I'm neither seller nor buyer—but still I'm the last of the name that lived there—I was Kellett of Kellett's Court, and there'll never be another to say the same, and I owe it to myself to be there to-day—just as I'd attend a funeral—just as I'd follow the hearse."

"It will only give you needless pain, dearest father," said she soothingly; "pray do not go."

"Faith, I'll go, if it gave me a fit," said he fiercely. "They may say when they go home, 'Paul Kellett was there the whole time, as cool as *I* am now; you'd never believe it was the old family place—the house his ancestors lived in for centuries—was up for sale; there he was calm and quiet. If that isn't courage, tell me what is?'"

"And yet I'd rather you did not go, father. The world has trials enough to tax our energies, that we should not go in search of them."

"That's a woman's way of looking at it," said he contemptuously. "A man with a man's heart likes to meet danger, just to see how he'll treat it."

"But remember, father——"

"There, now," said he, rising from the table, "if you talked till you were tired, I'd go still. My mind is made up on it."

Bella turned away her head and stole her handkerchief to her eyes.

"I know very well," burst he in, bitterly, "that the black-guard newspapers to-morrow will just be as ready to abuse me for it. It would have been more dignified, or more decent, or something or other, if Mr. Kellett had not appeared at the sale; but I'll go, nevertheless, if it was only to see the man that's to take our place there! Wait dinner for me till six, that is, if there's any dinner at all." And with a laugh of bitterest meaning he left the room, and was soon seen issuing from the little garden into the road.

What a sad day, full of gloomy forebodings, was that for her! She knew well how all the easy and careless humour of her father had been changed by calamity into a spirit fierce and resentful; that, suspectful of insult on every hand, he held himself ever prepared to meet the most harmless remark with words of defiance. An imaginary impression that the world had agreed to scorn him, made him adopt a bearing at once aggressive and offensive; and he who was once a proverb for good temper, became irritable and savage to a degree.

What might not come of such a temperament, tried in its tenderest spot? What might occur to expose him to the heartless sneers of those who neither knew his qualities nor his trials? These were her thoughts as she walked to and fro in her little room, unable to read, unable to write, though she made several attempts to begin a letter to her brother. The dark future also lowered before, without one flicker of light to pierce its gloom. How were they to live? In a few days more they would be at the end of their frail resources—something less than two pounds was all that they had in the world. How she envied those in some foreign land who could stoop to the most menial labour, unseen and unremembered by their own. How easily, she thought, poverty might be borne, if divested of the terrible contrast with a former condition. Could they by any effort raise the means to emigrate—and where to? Might not Mr. Dunn be the person to give counsel in such a case? From all she had heard of him, he was conversant with every career, every walk, and every condition. Doubtless he could name the very colony, and the very spot to suit them—nor impossible that he might aid them to reach it. If they prospered, they could repay him. They might pledge themselves to such a condition on this head as he

would dictate. How, then, to approach him? A letter? And yet a letter was always so wanting in the great requisite of answering doubts as they arose, and meeting difficulties by ready rejoinder. A personal interview would do this. Then why not ask for an audience of him? "I'll call upon him at once," said she; "he may receive me without other solicitation—my name will surely secure me that much of attention." Would her father approve of such a step?—would it not appear to his eyes an act of meanness and dependence?—might not the whole scheme be one to which he would offer opposition? From conflicts like these she came back to the dreary present, and wondered what could still delay his coming. It was a road but little travelled, and, as she sat watching at the window, her eyes grew wearied piercing the hazy atmosphere, darkening deeper and deeper as night drew near. She endeavoured to occupy herself in various ways: she made little preparations for his coming—she settled his room neatly, over and over—she swept the hearth, and made a cheerful fire to greet him, and then, passing into the kitchen, she looked after the humble dinner that awaited him. Six o'clock passed, and another weary hour followed. Seven—and still he came not. She endeavoured to divert her thoughts into thinking of the future she had pictured to herself. She tried to fancy the scenery, the climate, the occupation of that dream-land over the seas, but at every bough that beat against the window by the wind, at every sound of the storm without, she would start up, and hasten to the door to listen.

It was now near eight o'clock, and so acute had her hearing become by intense anxiety that she could detect the sounds of a footfall coming along the plashy road. She did not venture to move, lest she should lose the sound, and she dreaded, too, lest it should pass on. She bent down her head to hear, and now, oh, ecstasy of relief! she heard the latch of the little wicket raised, and the step upon the gravel-walk within. She rushed at once to the door, and, dashing out into the darkness, threw herself wildly upon his breast, saying, "Thank God you are come! Oh! how I have longed for you, dearest, dearest father!" And then as suddenly, with a shriek, cried out, "Who is it? Who is this?"

"Conway—Charles Conway. A friend—at least one who would wish to be thought so."

With a wild and rapid utterance she told him of her long and weary watch, and that her fears—mere causeless fears, she said she knew they were—had made her nervous and miserable.

Her father's habits, always so regular and homely, made even an hour's delay a source of anxiety. "And then he had not been well for some days back—circumstances had occurred to agitate him—things preyed upon him more heavily than they had used. Perhaps it was the dreary season—perhaps their solitary kind of life had rendered them both more easily depressed. But, somehow——" She could not go on, but, hastening towards the window, pressed her hands to her face.

"If you could tell me where I would be likely to hear of him—what are his haunts in town——"

"He has none—none whatever. He has entirely ceased to visit any of his former friends—even Mr. Beecher he has not called on for months long."

"Has he business engagements in any quarter that you know of?"

"None now. He did hold an office in the Customs, but he does so no longer. It is possible—just possible—he might have called at Mr. Dunn's, but he could not have been detained there so late as this. And if he were——" She stopped, confused and embarrassed.

"As to that," said he, catching at her difficulty with ready tact, "I could easily pretend it was my own anxiety that caused the visit. I could tell him it was likely I should soon see Jack again, and ask of him to let me be the bearer of some kind message to him."

"Yes, yes," muttered Bella, half vacantly, for he had only given to his words the meaning of a mere pretext.

"I think you may trust to me that I will manage the matter delicately. He shall never suspect that he has given any uneasiness by his absence."

"But even this," said she, eagerly, "condemns me to some hours longer of feverish misery. You cannot possibly go back to town and return here in less than two—perhaps three hours."

"I'll try and do it in half the time," said Conway rising, and taking his cap. "Where does Mr. Dunn live?"

"In Merrion-square. I forget the number, but it does not matter—every one knows his house. It is on the north side."

"You shall see me before—— What o'clock is it now?"

"Half-past eight," said she, shuddering, as she saw how late it was.

"Before eleven, I promise you confidently—and earlier if I can."

"You know my father so very little—so very recently," said

Sybella, with some confusion, "that it may be necessary to guard you—that is, you ought to be made aware that on this day the estate our family has held for centuries was sold. It is true we are no poorer than we were yesterday; the property we called our own, and from habit believed to be such, had been mortgaged this many a year. Why or how we ever fancied that one day or other we should be in a position to pay off the encumbrances, I cannot tell you; but it is true that we did so fancy, and used to talk of that happy event as of one we felt to be in store for us. Well, the blow has fallen at last, and demolished all our castle-building! Like storm-tossed vessels, we saw ships sinking on every side, and yet caught at hope for ourselves. This hope has now left us. The work of this morning has obliterated every trace of it. It is of this, then, I would ask you to be mindful when you see my poor father. He has seen ruin coming this many a year—it never came face to face with him till to-day. I cannot tell how he may brave it, though there was a time I could have answered for his courage."

"Jack Kellett's father could scarcely be deficient in that quality," said Conway, whose flashing eyes showed that it was Jack's sister was uppermost in his mind as he spoke.

"Oh!" said she, sorrowfully, "great as the heroism is that meets death on the field of battle, it is nothing to the patient and enduring bravery that confronts the daily ills of life—confronts them nobly, but in humility, neither buoyed up by inordinate hope, nor cast down by despondency, but manfully resolved to do one's best, and, come what may, to do it without sacrifice of self-respect. Thus meeting fate, and with a temper that all the crosses of life have not made irritable nor suspectful, makes a man to my eyes a greater hero than any of those who charge in forlorn hopes, or single-handed rush up the breach torn by grape-shot." Her cheek, at first pale, grew deeper and deeper red, and her dark eyes flashed till their expression became almost wild in brilliancy, when, suddenly checking her passionate mood, she said, "It were better I should go along with you—better; at least, I were at hand. He will bear much from me that he would not endure from another, and I will go." So saying, she hastened from the room, and in a moment came back shawled and ready for the road.

"What a night for you to venture out," said Conway; "and I have got no carriage of any kind."

"I am well accustomed to brave bad weather, and care nothing for it."

"It is raining fearfully, and the waves are washing clear over the low sea-wall," said he, trying to dissuade her.

"I have come out here on many such nights, and never the worse for it. Can't you fancy Jack Kellett's sister equal to more than this?" said she, smiling through all her sadness, as she led the way to the door.

And now they were upon the road, the wild rain and the gusty wind beating against them, and almost driving them back. So loud the storm that they did not try to speak, but with her arm close locked within his own, Conway breasted the hurricane with a strange sensation of delight he had never known before.

Scarcely a word passed between them as they went; as the rain beat heavily against her he would try as well as he could to shelter her; when the cutting wind blew more severely he would draw her arm closer within his own, and yet thus in silence they grew to each other like friends of many a year. A sense of trustfulness, a feeling of a common object, too, sufficed to establish between them a sentiment to be moulded by the events of after life into anything. Ay, so is it! Out of these chance affinities grow sometimes the passion of a life, and sometimes the disappointments that embitter existence!

"What a good fortune it was that brought you to my aid to-night," said she; "I had not dared to have come this long road alone."

"What a good fortune mine to have even so humble a service to render you. Jack used to talk to me of you, for hours long. Nights just like this have we passed together, he telling me about your habits and your ways, so that this very incident seems to fit into the story of your life as an every-day occurrence. I know," continued he, as she seemed to listen attentively, "how you used to ride over the mountains at home, visiting wild and out-of-the-way spots; how you joined him in his long fishing excursions, exploring the deep mountain gorges while he lingered by the river-side. The very names you gave these desolate places—taken from old books of travel—showed me how a spirit of enterprise was in your heart."

"Were they not happy days!" murmured she, half to herself.

"They must have been," said he, ardently; "to hear of them has charmed the weariest watches of the night, and made me long to know you."

"Yes; but I am not what I was," said she, hastily. "Out of that dreamy, strange existence I have awakened to a world full of its own stern realities. That pleasant indolence has ill pre-

pared me for the road I must travel—and it was selfish, too! The vulgarest cares of every-day life are higher aims than all the mere soarings of imagination, and of this truth I am only now becoming aware."

"But it was for never neglecting those very duties Jack used to praise you; he said that none save himself knew you as other than the careful mistress of a household."

"Poor fellow! ours was an humble retinue, and needed little guidance."

"I see," said Conway, "you are too proud to accept of such esteem as mine; but yet you can't prevent me offering it."

"Have I not told you how I prize your kindness?" said she, gently.

"Will you let me think so?" cried Conway, pressing her arm closely; and again they were silent. Who knows with what thoughts?

How dreary did the streets seem as they entered Dublin. The hazy lamps, dulled by the fast-falling rain, threw a misty light through the loaded atmosphere; the streets, deserted by all but the very poorest, were silent and noiseless, save for the incessant plash of the rain; few lights were seen on any side, and all was darkness and gloom. Wearily they plodded onward, Sybella deeply sunk in her own thoughts as to the future, and Conway, too respectful of her feelings to interrupt her, never uttered a word as they went. At last they reached Merrion-square, and after some little search stood at the door of Mr. Davenport Dunn. Sybella drew a heavy sigh as Conway knocked loudly and muttered to herself, "Heaven grant me good tidings of my father!"

CHAPTER XXII.

AFTER A DINNER PARTY.

MR. DAVENPORT DUNN had a dinner party—he entertained the notables of the capital, and a chief secretary, a couple of judges, a poor-law commissioner, and some minor deities, soldier and civilian, formed his company. They were all social, pleasant, and conversational. The country was growing governable, calendars were light, military duty a mere pastime, and they chatted agreeably over reminiscences of a time—not very remote neither—when Rockites were rife, gaols crammed, and the fatigues and perils of a soldier not inferior to those of actual warfare.

“To our worthy host here!” said the Chief Baron, eyeing his claret before the light—and it was a comet vintage—“to our worthy host here are we indebted for most of this happy change.”

“Under Providence,” whispered the oily Dean of the Chapel Royal.

“Of course, so I mean,” said the Judge, with that kind of impatience he would have met a needless suggestion in court. “Great public works, stupendous enterprises, and immense expenditure of capital have encountered rebellion by the best of all methods—prosperity!”

“Is it really extinct—has Lazarus died, or is he only sleeping?” interposed a small dark-eyed man, with a certain air of determination and a look of defiance that seemed to invite discussion.

“I should, at all events, call it a trance that must lead to perfect recovery,” said the Chief Secretary. “Ireland is no longer a difficulty.”

“She may soon become something more,” said the dark man; “instead of embarrassing your counsels, she may go far towards

swaying and controlling them. The energies that were once wasted in factious struggles at home here, may combine to carry on a greater combat in England; and it might even happen that your statesmen might look back with envy to days of orange-and-green memory."

"She would gladly welcome the change you speak of," said the Secretary.

"I'm not so sure of that, Sir; you have not already shown yourselves so very tolerant when tried. It is but a few years ago, and your Bar rebelled at the thought of an Irishman being made Master of the Rolls in England, and that Irishman, Plunkett."

"I must say," burst in the Attorney-General, fresh from his first session in Parliament, and, more still, his first season in town, "this is but a prejudice—an unjust prejudice. I can assert for myself, that I never rose in the House without experiencing a degree of attention—a deference, in short——"

"Eminently the right of one whose opinions were so valuable," said the Secretary, bowing blandly, and smiling.

"You did not lash them too often nor too much, Hutchard," said the dark man. "If I remember aright, you rose once in the session, and that was to move an adjournment."

"Ah, Lindley," said the other, good-humouredly, "you are an unforgiving enemy." Then, turning to the Chief Secretary, he said, "He cannot pardon my efforts, successful as they have been, to enable the Fellows of the University to marry. He obtained his fellowship as a safe retirement, and now discovers that his immunity is worth nothing."

"I beg pardon," said Lindley; "I have forgiven you long ago. It was from your arguments in its favour the measure was so long resisted. You are really blameless in the matter!"

The sharp give and take of these sallies—the fruit of those intimacies which small localities produce—rather astonished the English officials, and the Secretary and the Commissioner exchanged glances of significant import; nor was this lost on the Chief Baron, who, to change the topic, suddenly asked,

"Who bought that estate—Kellett's Court, I think they call it—was sold this morning?"

"I purchased it in trust," said Dunn, "for an English peer."

"Does he intend ever to reside there?"

"He talks of it, my Lord," said Dunn, "the way men talk of something very meritorious that they mean to do—one day or other."

"It went, I hear, for half its value," remarked some one.

"A great deal above that, I assure you," said Dunn. "Indeed, as property is selling now, I should not call the price a bad one."

"Evidently Mr. Kellett was not of your mind," said the former speaker, laughing.

"I'm told he burst into Court to-day and abused every one, from the Bench to the crier, called the sale a robbery, and the judge a knave."

"Not exactly that. He did, it is true, interrupt the order of the Court, but the sale was already concluded. He used very violent language, and so far forgot his respect for the Bench as to incur the penalty of a committal."

"And was he committed?" asked the Secretary.

"He was; but rather as a measure of precaution than punishment. The Court suspected him to be insane." Here Dunn leaned over and whispered a few words in the Secretary's ear. "Nor was it without difficulty," muttered he, in a low tone. "He continued to inveigh in the most violent tone against us all; declared he'd never leave the gaol without a public apology from the Bench; and, in fact, conducted himself so extravagantly, that I half suspected the judge to be right, and that there was some derangement in the case."

"I remember Paul Kellett at the head of the grand jury of his county," said one.

"He was high sheriff the first year I went that circuit," said the Judge.

"And how has it ended—where is he now?" whispered the Secretary.

"I persuaded him to come home here with me, and after a little calming down he became reasonable and has gone to his own house, but only within the last hour. It was that my servant whispered me, when he last brought in the wine."

"And I suppose, after all," said the Poor-Law Commissioner, "there was nothing peculiar in this instance; his case was one of thousands."

"Quite true, Sir," said Lindley. "Statistical tables can take no note of such-like applicants for out-door relief; all are classified as paupers."

"It must be acknowledged," said the Secretary, in a tone of half rebuke, "that the law has worked admirably; there is but one opinion on that subject in England."

"I should be greatly surprised were it otherwise," said Lind.

ley; "I never heard that the Cornish fishermen disparaged shipwrecks!"

"Who is that gentleman?" whispered the Secretary to Dunn.

"A gentleman very desirous to be Crown Prosecutor at Melbourne," said Dunn, with a smile.

"He expresses himself somewhat freely," whispered the other.

"Only here, Sir—only here, I assure you. He is our staunchest supporter in the College."

"Of course we shall take Sebastopol, Sir," said a colonel from the end of the table. "The Russians are already on half rations, and their ammunition is nigh exhausted." And now ensued a lively discussion of military events, wherein the speakers displayed as much confidence as skill.

"It strikes me," said Lindley, "we are at war with the Emperor Nicholas for practising pretty much the same policy we approve of so strenuously for ourselves. He wanted to treat Turkey like an encumbered estate. There was the impoverished proprietor, the beggared tenantry, the incapacity for improvement—all the hackneyed arguments, in fact, for selling out the Sultan that we employ so triumphantly against the Irish gentleman."

"Excuse me," said the Attorney-General, "he wanted to take forcible possession."

"Nothing of the kind. He was as ready to offer compensation as we ourselves are when we superannuate a clerk or suppress an office. His sole mistake was, that he proposed a robbery at the unlucky moment that the nation had taken its periodical attack of virtue—we were in the height of our honest paroxysm when he asked us to be knaves; and hence all that has followed."

"You estimate our national morality somewhat cheaply, Sir," said the Commissioner.

"As to morals, I think we are good political economists. We buy cheaply, and endeavour at least to sell in the dearest markets."

"No more wine, thank you," said the Secretary, rising. "A cup of coffee, with pleasure."

It was a part of Davenport Dunn's policy to sprinkle his dinner company with men like Lindley. They were what physicians call a sort of mild irritants, and occasionally very useful in their way; but, in the present instance, he rather suspected that the application had been pushed too far, and he approached

the Secretary in the drawing-room with a kind of half apology for his guest.

"Ireland," said he, "has always possessed two species of place-hunters: the one, patiently supporting Government for years, look calmly for the recognition of their services as a debt to be paid; the other, by an irritating course of action, seem to indicate how vexatious and annoying they may prove if not satisfactorily dealt with. Lindley is one of these, and he ought to be provided for."

"I declare to you, Dunn," said the Secretary, as he drew his arm within the other's, and walked with him into the back drawing-room, "these kind of men make government very difficult in Ireland. There is no reserve—no caution about them. They compromise one at every step. You are the only Irishman I ever met who would seem to understand the necessity of reserve."

Dunn bowed twice. It was like the acknowledgment of what he felt to be a right.

"I go further," said the other, warming; "you are the only man here who has given us real and effective support, and yet never asked for anything."

"What could I wish for better than to see the country governed as it is?" said Dunn, courteously.

"All are not inspired so patriotically, Dunn. Personal advantages have their influence on most men."

"Of course—naturally enough. But I stand in no need of aid in this respect. I don't want for means. I couldn't, if you offered it, take office; my hands are too full already, and of work which another might not be able to carry out. Rank, of course—distinction——" and he stopped, and seemed confused.

"Well, come, we might meet you there, Dunn," said the other, coaxingly. "Be frank with me. What do you wish for?"

"My family is of humble origin, it is true," said Dunn; "but without invidious reflection, I might point to some others——" Again he hesitated.

"*That* need not be an obstacle," said the Secretary.

"Well, then, on the score of fortune, there are some poorer than myself in—in——" He stopped again.

"Very few as wealthy, I should say, Dunn—very few indeed. Let me only know your wishes. I feel certain how they will be treated."

"I am aware," said Dunn, with some energy, "that you incur

the risk of some attack in anything you would do for me. I am necessarily in scant favour with a large party here. They would *assail you*, they would *vilify me*; but that would pass over. A few weeks—a few months at furthest——”

“To be sure—perfectly correct. It would be mere momentary clamour. Sir Davenport Dunn, Baronet, would survive——”

“I beg pardon,” said Dunn, in a voice tremulous with emotion. “I don’t think I heard you aright; I trust, at least, I did not.”

The Secretary looked quickly in his face, and saw it pale, the lips slightly quivering, and the brow contracted.

“I was saying,” said he, in a voice broken and uncertain, “that I’m sure the Premier would not refuse to recommend you to her Majesty for a baronetcy.”

“May I make so bold as to ask if you have already held any conversation with the Minister on this subject?”

“None whatever. I assure you most solemnly that I have no instructions on the subject, nor have I ever had any conversation with him on the matter.”

“Then let me beg you to forget what has just passed between us. It is, after all, mere chit-chat. That’s a Susterman’s, that portrait you are looking at,” said he, eager to change the topic. “It is said to be a likeness of Bianca Capello.”

“A very charming picture indeed; purchased, I suppose, in your last visit abroad.”

“Yes; I bought it at Verona. Its companion yonder, was a present from the Archduke Stephen, in recognition, as he was gracious enough to call it, of some counsels I had given the Government engineers about drainage in Hungary. Despotic Governments, as we like to term them, have this merit, at least—they confer acts of munificent generosity.”

The Secretary muttered an assent, and looked confused.

“I reaped a perfect harvest of crosses and decorations,” continued Dunn, “during my tour. I have got cordons from countries I should be puzzled to point out on the map, and am a Noble in almost every land of Europe but my own.”

“Ours is the solitary one where the distinction is not a mere title,” said the other, “and consequently there are graver considerations about conferring it than if it were a mere act of courtesy.”

“Where power is already acquired there is often good policy in legitimatising it,” said Dunn, gravely. “They say that even the Church of Rome knows how to affiliate a heresy.—Well, Clowes, what is it?” asked he of the butler, who stood awaiting

a favourable moment to address him. He now drew nigh, and whispered some words in his ear.

"But you said I was engaged—that I had company with me?" said Dunn, in reply.

"Yes, Sir, but she persisted in saying that if I brought up her name you would certainly see her, were it but for a moment. This is her card."

"Miss Kellett," said Dunn to himself. "Very well. Show her into the study, I will come down.—It is the daughter of that unfortunate gentleman we were speaking of a while ago," said he, showing the card. "I suppose some new disaster has befallen him. Will you excuse me for a moment?"

As Dunn slowly descended the stairs, a very strange conflict was at work within him. From his very boyhood there had possessed him a stern sentiment of vengeance against the Kellett family. It was the daily lesson his father repeated to him. It grew with his years, and vague and unmeaning as it appeared, it had the force of an instinct. His own memory failed him as to all the circumstances of an early insult, but enough remained to make him know that he had been ignominiously treated and expelled from the house. In the great career of his life, with absorbing cares and high interests around him, he had little time for such memories, but in moments of solitude or of depression the thought would come up, and a sense of vindictive pleasure fill him, as he remembered, in the stern words of his father, where *was he*, and where were *they*? In the protection he had that very day assumed to throw over Kellett in the Court, there was the sentiment of an insolent triumph; and here was again the daughter of the once proud man supplicating an interview with him.

These were his thoughts as he entered the room where Sybella Kellett was standing near the fire. She had taken off her bonnet, and as her long hair fell down, and her dripping clothes clung to her, the picture of poverty and destitution her appearance conveyed revolted against the sentiment which had so lately filled him, and it was in a voice of gentle meaning he asked her to be seated.

"Can you tell me of my father, Sir?" said she, eagerly, and not heeding his words; "he left home early this morning, and has never returned."

"I can tell you everything, Miss Kellett," said he, in a kind voice. "It will reassure you at once when I say he is well. Before this he is at home again."

The young girl clasped her hands closely, and her pale lips murmured some faint words.

"In a moment of excitement this morning, he said something to offend the Court. It was an emergency to try a calmer temper perhaps than his; indeed he ought not to have been there; at all events, he was betrayed into expressions which could not be passed over in mere silence, and he was committed——"

"To prison?" said she, faintly.

"Yes, he was taken into custody, but only for a few hours. I obtained his release soon after the Court rose. The difficulty was to make him accept of his liberation. Far from having calmed down, his passion had only increased, and it was only after much entreaty that he consented to leave the gaol and come here with me. In fact, it was under the pretence of drawing up a formal protest against his arrest that he did come, and he has been employed in this manner till about an hour ago, when one of my clerks took charge of him to convey him home. A little quietness and a little rest will restore him perfectly, however, and I have no doubt to-morrow or next day will leave no trace of this excitement."

"You have been most kind," said she, rising, "and I am very grateful for it. We owe much to you already, and this last but increases the debt."

Dunn stood silently contemplating her, as she replaced her bonnet and prepared for the road. At last he said, "Have you come all this way on foot and alone?"

"On foot, but not alone; a comrade of my brother's; a fellow-soldier of his, kindly gave me his escort. He is waiting for me now without."

"Oh, then, the adventure has had its compensation to a certain degree," said Dunn, with a smile of raillery.

"Either I do not understand you, or you mistake me, which is it?" said she, boldly.

"My dear young lady," said Dunn, hastily, "do not let me offend you. There is everything in what you have done this night to secure you respect and esteem. We live in a time when there is wonderfully little of personal devotion; and commonplace men like myself may well misjudge its sacrifices."

"And yet it is precisely from you I should have expected the reverse. If great minds are tainted with littleness, where are we to look for high and noble sentiments?" She moved towards the door as she spoke, and Dunn, anticipating her, said,

"Do not go for a moment; let me offer you some refreshment, even a glass of wine. Well then, your friend? It is scarcely courteous to leave him outside in such weather."

"Pray forgive me not accepting your offer; but I am impatient to be at home again. My father, too, will be distressed at my absence."

"But I will send my carriage with you; you shall not walk," said he, ringing the bell.

"Do not think me ungrateful, but I had rather return as I came. You have no idea, Sir, how painfully kindness comes to hearts like ours. A sense of pride sustains us through many a trial; break down this, and we are helpless."

"Is it that you will accept nothing at my hands—even the most common-place of attentions? Well, I'll try if I cannot be more fortunate elsewhere;" and so saying, he hurried at once from the room. Before Sybella could well reflect on his words, he was back again, followed by Charles Conway.

"Miss Kellett was disposed to test your Crimean habits again, my good fellow," said Dunn, "by keeping you out there under this terrible rain, and I perceive you have got some rough treatment already;" and he looked at the armless sleeve of his jacket.

"Yes," said Conway, laughing, "a piece of Russian politeness!"

Few as were the words, the tone and manner of the speaker struck Dunn with astonishment, and he said,

"Have you been long in the service?"

"Some years," was the short reply.

"It's very strange," said Dunn, regarding him fixedly, "but your features are quite familiar to me. You are very like a young officer who cut such a dash here formerly—a spendthrift fellow, in a Lancer regiment."

"Pray don't involve yourself in any difficulty," said Conway, "for, perhaps—indeed, I'm convinced—you are describing myself."

"Conway, of the Twelfth?"

"The same, at your service—at least, in so far as being ruined and one-armed, means the same with the fellow who had a good fortune, and two hands to scatter it."

"I must go. I'm impatient to be away," said Sybella, eagerly.

"Then there is the carriage at the door," said Dunn. "This time I have resolved to have my way;" and he gave her his arm courteously to conduct her.

"Could you call upon me to-morrow—could you breakfast with me, Mr. Conway?" said Dunn, as he gave him his hand at parting; "my request is connected with a subject of great importance to yourself."

"I'm your man," said Conway, as he followed Sybella into the carriage. And away they drove.

CHAPTER XXIII.

▲ BREAKFAST-TABLE.

WHEN, punctual to the appointed time, Charles Conway presented himself at Mr. Dunn's door, he learned to his astonishment that that gentleman had gone out an hour before to breakfast with the Chief Secretary in the Park.

"But I came by invitation to breakfast with your master," said he.

"Possibly so," said Clowes, scanning the simply-clad soldier before him. "He never mentioned it to me, that's all I know."

Conway stood for a moment, half uncertain what to say; then, with a quiet smile, he said, "Pray tell him that I was here—my name is Conway."

"As to the breakfast part of the matter," said Clowes, who felt "rather struck" by something in the soldier's manner, as he afterwards expressed it, "I'm just about to take mine—you might as well join me."

Conway looked him full in the face—such a stare was it as a man gives when he questions the accuracy of his own senses; a slight flush then rose to his cheek, and his lip curled, and then, with a saucy laugh, that seemed to combat the passing irritation he was suffering, he said, "It's not a bad notion after all; I'm your man."

Now, though Mr. Clowes had anticipated a very different reception to his politeness, he said nothing, but led the way into his sanctum, trusting to the locality and its arrangement to have their due effect upon his guest. Indeed, in this respect, he did but fair justice to the comforts around him.

The breakfast-table, placed close to a cheerful fire, was spread with every luxury of that meal. A small spirit lamp burned

under a dish of most appetising outlets, in the midst of various kinds of bread, and different sorts of preserves. The grateful odour of mocha mingled with the purer perfume of fresh flowers, which, although in mid-winter, were never wanting at Mr. Clowes's breakfast-table, while in the centre rose a splendid pineapple, the first of the season, duly offered by the gardener to the grand vizier of Davenport Dunn.

"I can promise you a better breakfast than *he* would have given you," said Clowes, as he motioned his guest to a seat, while he significantly jerked his thumb towards Dunn's study. "*He* takes tea and dry toast, and ~~he~~ quite forgets to order anything else. He has some crank or other about beginning the day with a light meal—quite a mistake—don't you think so?"

"This is not the most favourable moment to make me a convert to that opinion," said Conway, laughing. "I must confess I incline to *your* side of the controversy."

"There are herrings there," said Clowes, "and a spatchcock coming. You see," continued he, returning to the discussion, "he overworks—he does too much—taxes his powers beyond their strength—beyond any man's strength;" and here Mr. Clowes threw himself back in his chair, and looked pompously before him, as though to say, Even Clowes wouldn't have constitution for what *he* does.—"A man must have his natural rest, Sir, and his natural support;" and in evidence of the last he re-helped himself to the Strasburg Pâté.

"Your words are wisdom, and washed down with such Bordeaux I'd like to see who'd gainsay them," said Conway, with a droll twinkle of the eye.

"Better coffee that, I fancy, than you got in the Crimea," said Clowes, pointing to the coffee-pot.

"I suspect Lord Raglan himself never saw such a breakfast as this. May I ask if it be your every-day meal?"

"We change slightly with the seasons. Oysters and Sauterne suit spring; and then, when summer sets in, we lean towards the subacid fruits and claret-cup. Dash your pineapple with a little rum—it's very old, and quite a liqueur."

"This must be a very jolly life of yours," said Conway, as he lighted his cigarette and placed his feet on the fender.

"You'd prefer it to the trenches or the rifle-pits, I suspect," said Clowes, laughing, "and small blame to you. It was out there you lost your arm, I suppose?"

Conway nodded, and puffed on in silence.

"A bad business—a bad business we're making of it all!

The Crimea was a mistake; we should have marched direct to Moscow—Moscow, or St. Petersburg—I don't care which."

"Nor should I, if we could get there," said Conway, quietly.

"Get there—and why not? Fifty thousand British bayonets are a match for the world in arms. It is a head we want, Sir—capacity to deal with the great questions of strategy. Even you yourself must have remarked that we have no generalship—no guidance——"

"I won't say that," said Conway, quietly. "We're knocking hard at Sebastopol, and all we can say is we haven't found the weak spot yet."

"The weak spot! Why it's all weak—earthworks, nothing but earthworks! Now, don't tell *me* that Wellington would have minded earthworks! Ah! we have fallen upon sad times," sighed he, piteously. "Our land commanders say earthworks are impregnable—our admirals say stone walls can't be attacked."

Conway laughed again, and lighted a fresh cigarette.

"And what pension have you for that?" asked Clowes, glancing at the empty sleeve.

"A mere trifle—I can't exactly tell you, for I have not applied for it."

"I would, though; I'd have it out of them, and I'd have whatever I could besides. They'd not give *you* the Bath—that they keep for gentlemen——"

Conway took his cigar from his lips, and while his cheek burned, he seemed about to reply; then, resuming his smoking, he lay back and said nothing.

"After all," said Clowes, "there must be distinctions of rank. One regrets, one deplores, but can't help it. Look at all the attempts at equality, and see their failures. No, Sir, you have *your* place in the social scale, and I have *mine*."

Now, when Mr. Clowes had enunciated this sentiment he seemed suddenly to be struck by its severity, for he added, "Not but that every man is respectable in his own rank; don't imagine that I look down upon *you*."

Conway's eyes opened widely as he stared at him, and he puffed his cigar a little more energetically, but never spoke.

"You've done with the service, I suppose?" said Clowes, after a while.

"I'm afraid so," said Conway, sighing.

"Well, *he*"—and he jerked his thumb towards Dunn's room—"he is the man to help you to something snug. He can give

away places every hour of the day. Ay, Sir," said he, warming, "he can make anything, from an archbishop to a barony constable."

"I rather fear that my capacity for employment might not be found very remarkable. I have idle habits and ways," said Conway, smiling.

"Bad things, my friend—bad things for any man, but especially for a poor one. I myself began life in an humble way—true, I assure you—but with industry, zeal, and attention, I am what you see me."

"That is encouraging, certainly," said Conway, gravely.

"It is so, and I mention it for your advantage."

Charles Conway now arose, and threw the half-smoked cigar into the fire. The movement betokened impatience, and sooth to say, he was half angry with himself, for while disposed to laugh at the vanity and conceit of the worthy butler, he still felt that he was his guest, and that such ridicule was ill applied to one whose salt he had eaten.

"You're not going without seeing him?" said Clowes. "He's sure to be in before noon. We are to receive the Harbour Commissioners exactly at twelve."

"I have a call to make, and at some distance off in the country, this morning."

"Well, if I can be of any use to you, just tell me," said Clowes, good-naturedly. "My position here—one of trust and confidence, you may imagine—gives me many an opportunity to serve a friend; and I like you. I was taken with your manner as you came into the hall this morning, and I said to myself, 'There's good stuff in that young fellow, whoever he is.' And I ain't wrong. You have some blood in you, I'll be bound."

"We used to be rather bumptious about family," said Conway, laughing; "but I suspect the world has taught us to get rid of some of our conceit."

"Never mind the world. Pride of birth is a generous prejudice. I have never forgotten that my grandfather, on the mother's side, was a drysalter. But can I be of any use to you? that's the question."

"I'm inclined to think not; though I'm just as grateful to you. Mr. Dunn asked me here this morning. I suspect, to talk over the war with me. Men naturally incline to hear what an eye-witness has to say, and he may have fancied I could have mentioned some new fact, or suggested some new expedient, which, in these days, seems such a fashionable habit, when everybody has his advice to proffer."

"No, no," said Clowes, shaking his head—"It couldn't be that. We have been opposed to this war from the beginning. It was all a mistake—a dead mistake. Aberdeen agreed with us, but we were outvoted. They would have a fight. They said we wanted something to get cotton-spinning out of our blood; and, egad! I suspect they've got it."

"Our views," continued Clowes, pompously, "were either a Peace or a march to St. Petersburg. This French alliance is a rotten thing, Sir. That Corsican will double on us. The very first moment any turn of fortune gives France an advantage, *he'll* make peace, and leave to us all the obloquy of a reluctant assent. That's *his* view—that's mine, too; and we are seldom mistaken."

"For all that, I wish I were back there again," said Conway. "With every one of its hardships—and they were no trifles—it was a better life than this lounging one I lead now. Tell Mr. Dunn, that I was here. Say that I enjoyed your excellent hospitality and pleasant company; and accept my hearty thanks for both." And with a cordial shake of the hand, Conway wished him "Good-by," and departed.

"That's just the class of men we want in our army," said Clowes, as he followed him with his eyes. "A stamp somewhat above the common—a very fine young fellow, too."

In less than a quarter of an hour after Conway's departure, Davenport Dunn's carriage drew up at his door, and Mr. Clowes hastened to receive his master.

"Are they out, Sir—are they out?" said he, eagerly, as he followed him into the study.

"Yes," said Dunn; "but everything is still at sixes and sevens. Lord Derby has been sent for, and Lord John sent for, and Lord Palmerston sent for, but nothing decided on—nothing done."

"And how will it end?" asked Clowes, like one waiting for the solution of a difficulty.

"Who has called this morning?" said Dunn, curtly. "Has Lord Glengariff been here?"

"No, Sir. Sir Jacob Harris and the Drumsna Directors are all in waiting, and a rather promiscuous lot are in the back parlour. A young soldier, too, was here. He fancied you had asked him to breakfast, and so I made him join mine."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Dunn. "I forgot all about that engagement. How provoking! Can you find out where he is stopping?"

"No. But he's sure to drop in again: I half promised him a sort of protection; and he looks a shrewd sort of fellow, and not likely to neglect his hits."

A strange twinkle shone in Dunn's eyes as he heard this speech, and a queer motion at the angle of his mouth accompanied it, but he never spoke a word.

As for Conway, meanwhile, he was briskly stepping out towards Clontarf, to inquire after poor Kellett, whose state was one to call for much anxiety. To the intense excitement of the morning there had succeeded a dull and apathetic condition, in which he seemed scarcely to notice anything or anybody. A look half weary, half vacant, was in his eye; his head was drooped; and a low muttering to himself was the only sign he gave of any consciousness whatever. Such was his state when Conway left the cottage late on the night before, with a promise to be back there again early the next morning.

Conway saw that the shutters of the little drawing-room were half closed as he entered the garden, and his quiet, cautious knock at the door denoted the fear at his heart. From the window, partly open, came a low, moaning sound, which, as he listened, he discovered to be the sick man's voice.

"He was just asking if you had come," said Bella. "He has been talking of poor Jack, and fancies that you have some tidings of him." And so saying she led him into the house.

Seated before the fire in a low chair, his hands resting on his knees, and his gaze fixed on the embers, Kellett never turned his head round as they entered, nor did he notice Bella as, in a soft, low, voice, she mentioned Conway's name.

"He has come out to see you, dear papa: to sit with you and keep you company, and talk about dear Jack."

"Ay!" said the sick man, in a vague, purposeless tone; and Conway now took a seat at his side, and laid one of his hands over his.

"You are better to day, Captain Kellett, ain't you?" said he, kindly.

"Yes," said he, in the same tone as before.

"And will be still better to-morrow, I trust, and able to come out and take this long walk with me we have so often promised ourselves."

Kellett turned and looked him full in the face. The expression of his features was that of one vainly struggling with some confusion of ideas, and earnestly endeavouring to find his way

through difficulties; and a faint, painful sigh at last showed that the attempt was a failure.

"What does this state mean? Is it mere depression, or is it serious illness?" whispered Bella.

"I am not skilful enough to say," replied Conway, cautiously; "but I hope and trust it is only the effect of a shock, and will pass off as it came."

"Ay," said Kellett, in a tone that startled them, and for a moment they fancied he must have overheard them; but one glance at his meaningless features showed that they had no ground for their fears.

"The evil is deeper than that," whispered Bella, again. "This cold dew on his forehead, those shiverings that pass over him from time to time, and that look in his eye, such as I have never seen before, all betoken a serious malady. Could you fetch a doctor—some one in whom you place confidence?"

"I do know of one, in whom I have the fullest reliance," said Conway, rising hastily. "I'll go for him at once."

"Lose not a moment, then," said Bella, as she took the place he had just vacated, and placed her hand on her father's, as Conway had done.

Kellett's glance slowly followed Conway to the door, and then turned fully in Bella's face, while, with a voice of a thrilling distinctness, he said, "Too late, darling—too late!"

The tears gushed from Bella's eyes, and her lips trembled, but she never uttered a word, but sat silent and motionless as before.

Kellett's eyes were now bent upon her fixedly, with an expression of deep and affectionate interest; and he slowly drew his hand from beneath hers, and placed his arm around her.

"I wish he was come, darling," said he, at last.

"Who, papa?—the doctor?" asked Bella.

"The doctor!—no, not the doctor," said he sighing heavily.

"It is poor Jack you are thinking of?" said she affectionately.

"Poor, sure enough," muttered he; "we're all poor now." And an inexpressible misery was in his face as he spoke.

Bella wished to speak words of comfort and encouragement; she longed to tell him that she was ready and willing to devote herself to him—that in a little time, and by a little effort on their part, their changed fortunes would cease to fret them—that they would learn to see how much of real happiness can consist with narrow means, but she knew not in what spirit her

words might be accepted; a chance phrase, an accidental expression, might jar upon some excited feeling and only irritate where it was meant to soothe, and so she only pressed her lips to his hand and was silent.

The sick man's head gradually declined lower and lower, his breathing grew heavier, and he slept. The long dreary day dragged on its weary hours, and still Sybella sat by her father's side watching and waiting. It was already dusk, when a carriage stopped at the little gate and Conway got out, and was quickly followed by another. "The doctor at last," muttered Sybella, gently moving from her place; and Kellett awoke and looked at him.

Conway had barely time to whisper the name of the physician in Bella's ear, when Sir Maurice Dashwood entered. There was none of the solemn gravity of the learned doctor—none of the catlike stealthiness of the fashionable practitioner in his approach. Sir Maurice advanced like a man entering a drawing-room before a dinner party, easy, confident, and affable. He addressed a few words to Miss Kellett, and then placing his chair next her father's, said,

"I hope my old brother officer doesn't forget me. Don't you remember Dashwood of the 43rd?"

"The wildest chap in the regiment," muttered Kellett, "though he was the surgeon. Did you know him, Sir?"

"I should think I did," said the Doctor, smiling; "he was a great chum of yours, wasn't he? You messed together in the Pyrenees for a whole winter."

"A wild chap—could never come to any good," went on Kellett to himself. "I wonder what became of him."

"I can tell you, I think. Meanwhile, let me feel your pulse. No fixed pain here," said he, touching the region of the heart. "Look fully at me. Ah, it is there you feel it," said he, as he touched the other's forehead; "a sense of weight rather than pain, isn't it?"

"It's like lead I feel it," said Kellett, "and when I lay it down I don't think I'll ever be able to lift it up again."

"That you will, and hold it high, too, Kellett," said the Doctor, warmly. "You must just follow my counsels for a day or two, and we shall see a great change in you."

"I'll do whatever you bid me, but it's no use, doctor; but I'll do it for her sake there." And the last words were in a whisper.

"That's spoken like yourself, Kellett," said the other, cheerily. "Now let me have pen and ink."

As the doctor sat down to a table, he beckoned Bella to his side, and writing a few words rapidly on the paper before him, motioned to her to read them.

She grasped the chair as she read the lines, and it shook beneath her hand, while an ashy pallor spread over her features.

"Ask him if I might have a little brandy-and-water, Bella," said the sick man.

"To be sure you may," said Sir Maurice; "or, better still, a glass of claret; and it so happens I have just the wine to suit him. Conway, come back with me, and I'll give you a half-dozen of it."

"And is there nothing—is there no——" Bella could utter no more, when a warning of the doctor's hand showed that her father's eyes were on her.

"Come here, Bella," said he, in a low tone, "come here to me. There's a pound in my waistcoat-pocket, in my room; put a shilling inside of it, for it's a guinea he ought to have, and gold by rights, if we had it. . And tell him, we'll send for him if we want to see him again. Do it delicately, darling, so as not to let him know. Say I'm used to these attacks; say they're in the family; say——But there they are driving away—they're off! and he never waited for his fee! That's the strangest thing of all." And so he fell a-thinking over this curious fact, muttering from time to time to himself, "I never heard of the like before."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE COTTAGE.

DAVENPORT DUNN had but little leisure to think about Conway or poor Kellett. A change of Ministry had just occurred in England, and men's minds were all eagerly speculating who was "to come in." Crowds of country gentlemen flocked up to Dublin, and "rising men" of all shades of opinion anxiously paraded their own claims to notice. Dunn's house was besieged from morning to night by visitors, all firmly persuaded that he must know more of the coming event than any one. Whether such was really the case, or that he deemed it good policy to maintain the delusion, Dunn affected a slight indisposition, and refused to admit any visitor. Mr. Clowes, indeed, informed the inquirers that it was a mere passing ailment—"a slight derangement in the bronchiæ," he said; but he rigidly maintained the blockade, and suffered none to infringe it.

Of course, a hundred rumours gave their own version of this illness. It was spleen; it was indignation; the Government had thrown him over; he had been refused the Secretaryship which he had formerly applied for. Others averred that his attack was most serious—an ossification or a schirrous of some cartilage, a thing always fatal and dreadfully painful. Some went further. It was his prosperity was in peril. Over-speculation had jeopardised him, and he was deep in the "Crédit Mobilier." Now all this while, the disappointed politician, the hopeless invalid, and the ruined speculator, ate and drank well, received and wrote replies to innumerable confidential notes from those in power, and carefully drew up a list of such as he desired to recommend to the Government for place and employment.

Every morning Sir Maurice Dashwood's well-appointed cab drew up at his door, and the lively baronet would dash up the stairs to Dunn's room with all the elasticity of youth, and more real energy than is the fortune of one young fellow in a thousand. With a consummate knowledge of men and the world, he was second to none in his profession. He felt he could afford to indulge the gay and buoyant spirits with which Nature had blessed him, and even, doctor that he was, take his share in all the sports of the field and all the pleasures of society.

"Well, Dunn," cried he, gaily, one morning, as he entered the carefully darkened room where the other sat, surrounded with papers and deep in affairs, "I think you may accept your bill of health, and come out of dock to-morrow. They are gazetted now, and the world as wise as yourself."

"So I mean to do," said Dunn. "I intend to dine with the Chancellor. What is said about the new Government?"

"Very little. There is really little to say. They are nearly the same pieces only placed differently on the board. This trumpery cry about 'right men in right places' will lead to all kinds of confusion, since it will eternally suggest choice, which, in plain words, means newspaper dictation."

"As good as any other dictation: better, in one respect, for it so often recants its judgments," said Dunn, sarcastically.

"Well, they are unanimous about *you* this morning. They are all eagerly inquiring in what way the Government propose to recognise the services of one of the ablest men and most disinterested patriots of our day."

"I don't want anything from them," said Dunn, testily, and walking to the window to avoid the keen, sharp glance the other bent upon him.

"The best way to get it when you *do* want," said Dashwood. "By the way, what's our new Viceroy like?"

"A very good appointment indeed," said Dunn, gravely.

"Oh, I don't mean that. I want to know what he is personally; is he stiff, haughty, grave, gay, stand-off, or affable?"

"I should say, from what I have seen of Lord Allington, that he is one of those men who are grave without sadness——"

"Come, come, never mind the antithesis; does he care for society? does he like sport? is he free-handed? or has he only come here with the traditional policy, to 'drain Ireland?'"

"You'll like him much," said Dunn, in his natural voice, "and he'll like *you*."

Sir Maurice smiled, as though to say, "I could answer as

much for myself;" and then asked, "Have you known him long?"

"No; that is, not very long," said Dunn, hesitating, "nor very intimately. Why do you ask?"

"Just because I want to get something—at once, too. There's a poor fellow, a patient of mine now—we were brother officers once—in a very sad way. Your friends of the Encumbered Court have just been selling him out, and by the shock they have so stunned him, that his brain has been attacked; at present it does not seem so formidable, but it will end in softening, and all the rest of it. Now, if they'd make him something at once—quickly it must be—he could drop out on some small retired allowance;—anything, in short, that would support him."

"But, what is it to be?" asked Dunn.

"Whatever you like to make him. It can scarcely be a bishop, for he's not in orders; nor a judge, for he was not called to the Bar; but why not a commissioner of something? you have them for all purposes and of all degrees."

"You take a low estimate of commissionerships, I perceive," said Dunn, smiling.

"They are row-boats, where two or three pull, and the rest only dip their oars. But come, promise me you'll look to this; take a note of the name—Paul Kellett, a man of excellent family, and once with a large landed property."

"I know him," said Dunn, with a peculiar significance.

"And know nothing to his disadvantage, I'm certain. He was a good officer and a kind-hearted fellow, whom we all liked. And there he is now," added he, after a pause, "with a charming girl—his daughter—and I really don't believe they have a five-pound note in the world. You must do this for me, Dunn. I'm bent upon it!"

"I'll see what can be done about it. Anything like a job is always a difficulty."

"And everything is a job here, Dunn, and no man knows better how to deal with one." And so saying, and with a pleasant laugh, the gay-hearted doctor hurried away, to carry hope, and some portion at least of his own cherry nature, into many a darkened sick-room.

Though several names were announced with pressing entreaties for an audience, Dunn would see no one. He continued to walk up and down the room deep in thought, and seemed resolved that none should interrupt him. There were events enough to occupy, cases enough to engage him—high questions of policy, deep matters of interest, all that can stimulate ambition, all that can

awaken energy—and yet, amidst all, where were his thoughts straying? They were away to the years of his early boyhood, when he had been Paul Kellett's playfellow, and when he was admitted—a rare honour—to the little dinner of the nursery! What a strange thing it was that it was “there and then” his first studies of life and character should have been made; that it was there and then he first moulded himself to the temper and ways of another; conforming to caprices, and tending to inclinations not his own. Stern tyrants were these child masters! how they *did* presume upon their high station! how severely did they make him feel the distance between them, and what arts did they teach him! what subtle devices to outwit their own imperiousness and give him the mastery over them! To these memories succeeded others more painful still, and Dunn's brow contracted and his lips became tight-drawn as he recollected them.

“I suppose even my father would allow that the debt is acquitted now,” muttered he to himself. “I'll go and see them!” said he, after a moment; “such a sight will teach me how far I have travelled in life.”

He gently descended a private stair that led to the garden, and passing out by the stables, soon gained the street. Walking rapidly on to the first stand, he engaged a car, and started for Clontarf.

If Davenport Dunn never gave way to a passion for revenge in life, it was in some sort because he deemed it a luxury above his means. He often fancied to himself that the time might come when he could indulge in this pleasure, just as now he revelled in a thousand others, which once had seemed as remote. His theory was, that he had not yet attained that eminence whence he could dispense with all aid, and he knew not what man's services at any moment might be useful to him. Still with all this, he never ceased to enjoy whatever of evil fortune befel those who even in times past had injured him. To measure their destiny with his now, was like striking a balance with Fate—a balance so strong in his favour; and when he had not actually contributed to their downfall, he deemed himself high-minded, generous, and pure-hearted.

It was reflecting in this wise he drove along, and at last drew up at Kellett's door; his knock was answered by Sybella herself, whose careworn features and jaded look scarcely reminded him of her appearance when first he saw her, flushed and excited by exercise.

"I thought I'd come myself and ask after him," said Dunn, as he explained the object of his visit.

"He has scarce consciousness enough to thank you," said she, mournfully, "but *I* am very grateful to you;" and she preceded him into the room, where her father sat in the self-same attitude as before.

"He doesn't know me," whispered Dunn, as the sick man's gaze was turned to him without the slightest sign of recognition—"he doesn't know me!"

"I do. I know you well, Davenport Dunn, and I know why you come here," said Kellett, with a distinctness that startled them both. "Leave us alone together, Bella, darling, we want to talk privately."

Sybella was so astounded at this sudden show of intelligence, that she scarcely knew how to take it, or what to do; but at a gesture from Dunn, she stepped noiselessly from the room, and left them together.

"You must not excite yourself, Kellett, nor prejudice your prospect of recovery by any exertion; there will be time enough for matters of business hereafter——"

"No there won't; that's the reason I want to talk to you now," said Kellett, sharply. "I know well enough my time is short here."

Dunn begun some phrase of cheering meaning, but the other stopped him abruptly, and said:

"There, there, don't be lesing time that way. Is that the touch of a man long for this world?" and he laid on the other's hand his own hot and burning fingers. "I said I knew why you came here, Dunn," continued he, more strongly; "it was to look at your work. Ay, just so. It was *you* brought me to this, and you wanted to see it. Turn *your* eyes round the room, and you'll see it's poor enough. Look in at that bedroom there, and you'll say it couldn't be much more humble! I pawned my watch yesterday; 'there's all that's out of it; and he showed some pieces of silver and copper mixed together in the palm of his hand; 'there's not a silver spoon left, so that you see you've done it well!"

"My dear Kellett, these words of your's have no meaning in them——"

"Maybe not; but maybe you understand them for all that! Look here now, Dunn," said he, clutching his hand in his own feverish grasp; "what the Child begins the Man finishes! I know you well, and I've watched you for many a year. All

your plans and schemes never deceived *me*; but it's a house of cards you're building after all! What I knew about you as a boy others may know as a man; and I wouldn't believe St. Peter if he told me you only did it *once*!"

"If this be not raving, it is a deliberate insult!" muttered Dunn, sternly, while he rudely pushed away the other's hand, and drew back his chair.

"Well, it's not raving, whatever it is," said Kellett, calmly. "The cold air of the earth that's opening for me, clears my brain, and I know well the words I'm saying, and the warning I'm giving you. Tell the people fairly that it's only scheming you were; that the companies are a bubble and the banks a sham; that you're only juggling this man's credit against that, making the people think that you have the confidence of the Government, and the Government believe that you can do what you like with the people. Go at once and publish it, that you are only cheating them all, or you'll have a gloomier ending even than this!"

"I came out of compassion for you."

"No you didn't, not a bit of it. You came to tell old Mat Dunn that the score was wiped off; *he* came to the window here this morning and looked in at me."

"My father? Impossible! He's nearly ninety, and barely able to move about a room."

"I don't care for that; there he was, where you see that bush, and he leaned on the window-sill and looked at me; and he wiped the glass, where his breath dulled it, twice. Then I gave a shout at him that sent him off. They had to carry him to the car outside."

"Is this true?" cried Dunn, eagerly.

"If I had had but the strength to bring me to the window, it's little I'd have minded his white hair."

"If you had dared!" said Dunn, rising, and no longer able to control his anger.

"Don't go yet; I have more to say to you," cried he, stretching out his hands towards him. "You think, because your roguery is succeeding, that you are great and respected. Not a bit; the gentlemen *won't* have you, and your own sort won't have you. There's not an honest man would eat your salt—there's not an honest girl would bear your name. There you stand, as much alone in the world as if you came out of another country, and you're the only man in Ireland doesn't see it."

Dunn darted from the room as the last words were uttered,

and gained the road. So overwhelmed was he by rage and astonishment, that it was some minutes ere he could remember where he was or whither he would go.

"To Beldoyle," said he to the carman, pointing in the direction of the low shore, where his father lived; "drive your best pace." Then, suddenly changing his mind, he said, "No, to town."

"Is he gone, Bella?" said Kellett, as his daughter entered.

"Yes; and before I could thank him for his coming."

"I think I said enough," said he, with a fierce laugh, which made her suddenly turn and look at him.

It was all she could do to repress a sudden cry of horror, for one side of his face was distorted by palsy, and the mouth drawn all awry.

"What's this here, Bella?" said he, trying to touch his cheek with his hand; "a kind of stiffness—a sort of——Eh, are you crying, darling?"

"No; it was something in my eye pained me," said she, turning away to hide her face.

"Give me a looking-glass, quickly," cried he.

"No, no," said she, forcing a laugh; "you have not shaved these two days, and you are quite neglected-looking. You shan't see yourself in such a state."

"Bring it this minute, I say," said he, passionately, and in a voice that grew less and less articulate every moment.

"Now pray be patient, dearest papa."

"Then I'll go for it myself;" and with these words he grasped the arm of the chair and tried to rise.

"There, there," said she, softly forcing him back into his seat, "I'll fetch it at once. I wish you would be persuaded, dear papa——" began she, still holding the glass in her hands. But he snatched it rudely from her, and placed it before him.

"That's what it is," said he, at last; "handsome Paul Kellett they used to call me at Corfu. I wonder what they'd say now."

"It is a mere passing thing, a spasm of some kind."

"Ay," said he, with a mocking laugh, to which the distortion imparted a shocking expression. "Both sides will be the same—to-morrow or next day—I know that."

She could hear no more, but covering her face with her hands, sobbed bitterly.

Kellett still continued to look at himself in the glass, and whether the contortion was produced by the malady or a passing emotion, a half-sardonic laugh was on his features as he said, "I was wrong when I said I'd never be chapfallen."

CHAPTER XXV.

A CHURCHYARD.

THERE come every now and then, in our strange climate, winter days which imitate the spring, with softened sunlight, glistening leaves, and warbling birds; even the streams unite in the delusion and run clearly along with eddying circles, making soft music among the stones. These delicious intervals are full of pleasant influences, and the garden breath that floats into the open drawing-room brings hope as well as health on its wings. It was on such a morning a little funeral procession entered the gateway of the ruined church at Kellester, and wound its way towards an obscure corner where an open grave was seen. With the exception of one solitary individual, it was easy to perceive that they who followed the coffin were either the hired mourners, or some stray passers-by indulging a sad curiosity in listlessness. It was poor Kellett's corpse was borne along, with Conway walking after it.

The mournful task over, and the attendants gone, Conway lingered about among the graves, now reading the sad records of surviving affection—now stopping to listen to the high-soaring lark whose shrill notes vibrated in the thin air. "Poor Jack!" thought he, aloud; "he little knows the sad office I have had this morning. He always was talking of home and coming back again, and telling his dear father of all his campaigning adventures; and so much for anticipation—beneath that little mound of earth lies all that made the Home he dreamed of! He's almost the last of the Albueras," said he, as he stood over the grave; and at the same time a stranger drew near the spot, and, removing his hat, addressed him by name. "Ah! Mr. Dunn, I think?" said Conway.

"Yes," said the other; "I regret to see that I am too late. I

wished to pay the last tribute of respect to our poor friend, but unfortunately all was over when I arrived."

"You knew him intimately, I believe?" said Conway.

"From boyhood," said Dunn, coughing, to conceal some embarrassment. "Our families were intimate; but of him, personally, I saw little; he went abroad with his regiment, and when he returned, it was to live in a remote part of the country, so that we seldom met."

"Poor fellow," muttered Conway, "he does seem to have been well-nigh forgotten by every one. I was alone here this morning!"

"Such is life!" said Dunn.

"But such ought not death to be," rejoined Conway. "A gallant old soldier might well have been followed to his last billet by a few friends or comrades; but he was poor, and that explains all!"

"That is a harsh judgment for one so young as you are."

"No; if poor Kellett had fallen in battle, he had gone to his grave with every honour to his memory; but he lived on in a world where other qualities than a soldier's are valued, and he was forgotten, that's the whole of it!"

"We must think of the daughter now; something must be done for her," said Dunn.

"I have a plan about that, if you will kindly aid me with it," said Conway, blushing as he spoke. "You are aware, perhaps, that Jack Kellett and I were comrades. He saved my life, and risked his own to do it, and I owe him more than life in the cheery, hearty spirit he inspired me with, at a time when I was rather disposed to sulk with the whole world, so that I owe him a heavy debt." Here he faltered, and at last stopped, and it was only as Dunn made a gesture to him to continue, that he went on. "Well, I have a dear, kind old mother living all alone in Wales, not over well off, to be sure, but quite able to do a kind thing, and fully as willing. If Miss Kellett could be induced to come and stay with her—it might be called a visit at first—time would gradually show them how useful they were to each other, and they'd find they needn't—they couldn't separate. That's my plan, will you support it?"

"I ought to tell you, frankly, that I have no presumption to counsel Miss Kellett. I never saw her till the night you accompanied her to my house; we are utter strangers to each other, therefore. There is, however, sufficient in your project to recommend itself, and if anything I can add will aid it, you may reckon

upon me; but you will yourself see whether my counsels be admissible. There is only one question I would ask—you'll excuse the farnkness of it for the sincerity it guarantees—Miss Kellett, although in poverty, was the daughter of a gentleman of fortune—all the habits of her life were formed in that station—now, is it likely—I mean—are your mother's circumstances——”

“My mother has something like a hundred a year in the world,” broke in Conway, hastily. “It's a poor pittance, I know, and you would be puzzled to say how one could eke out subsistence on it, but she manages it very cleverly.”

“I had really no intention to obtrude my curiosity so far,” said Dunn, apologising. “My object was to show you, generally, that Miss Kellett, having hitherto lived in a condition of comfort——”

“Well, we'll do our best—I mean, my mother will,” said Conway. “Only say you will recommend the plan, and I'm satisfied.”

“And for yourself—have you no project, no scheme of life struck out? A man so full of youth and energy should not sink into the listless inactivity of a retired soldier.”

“You forget this,” said Conway, pointing to his armless sleeve.

“Many a one-armed officer leads his squadron into fire; and your services, if properly represented—properly supported—would perhaps meet recognition at the Horse Guards. What say you, would you serve again if they offered you a cornetcy?”

“Would I?—would I bless the day that brought me the tidings? But the question is not of *me*,” said he proudly, and he turned away to leave the spot. Dunn followed him, and they walked out into the road together. A handsome chariot, splendid in all its appointments, and drawn by two powerful thorough-breds, awaited the rich man's coming, and the footman banged down the steps with ostentatious noise as he saw him approach.

“Let the carriage follow,” said Dunn to the servant, and walked on at Conway's side. “If it was not that I am in a position to be of service to you, my observation would be a liberty,” said Dunn; “but I have some influence with persons in power——”

“I must stop you at once,” said Conway, good-humouredly. “I belong to a class which does not accept of favours except from personal friends; and though I fully recognise your kind intentions towards me, remember, we are strangers to each other.”

"I should wish to forget that," said Dunn, courteously.

"I should still be ungracious enough to bear it in mind. Come, come, Mr. Dunn," said he, "this is not the topic I want you to be interested in. If you can bring some hope and comfort into that little cottage yonder, you will do a far greater kindness than by any service you can render one like me."

"It would scarcely be advisable to do anything for a day or two?" said Dunn, rather asking the question.

"Of course not. Meanwhile, I'll write to my mother, and she shall herself address Miss Kellett, or, if you think it better, she'd come over here."

"We'll think over that. Come back with me to town and eat your dinner with me, if you have no engagement."

"Not to day—excuse me to-day. I am low and out of sorts, and I feel as if I'd rather be alone."

"Will you let me see you to-morrow, or the day after?"

"The day after to-morrow be it. By that time I shall have heard from my mother," said Conway. And they parted.

Long after Mr. Dunn's handsome equipage had driven away, Charles Conway continued to linger about the neighbourhood of the little cottage. The shutters were closed, and no smoke issued from the chimney, and it looked dreary and desolate. Again and again would he draw near the little wicket and look into the garden. He would have given all he possessed to have been able to ask after her—to have seen any one who could have told him of her—how she bore up in her dread hour of trial; but none was to be seen. More than once he adventured to approach the door, and timidly stood, uncertain what to do, and then, cautiously retracing his steps, he regained the road, again to resume his lonely watch. And so the noon passed, and the day waned, and evening drew nigh, and there he still lingered. He thought that when night closed in, some flickering light might give sign of life within—some faint indication of her his heart was full of; but all remained dark, silent, and cheerless. Even yet, could he not bear to leave the spot, and it was already far into the night ere he turned his steps towards Dublin.

Let us go back for a moment to Mr. Davenport Dunn, who was not the only occupant of the handsome chariot that rolled smoothly back to town. Mr. Driscoll sat in one corner, the blind carefully down, so as to screen him from view.

"And that was Conway!" said he, as soon as Dunn had taken his seat. "Wasn't I right when I said you were sure to catch him here?"

"I knew as much myself," said Dunn, curtly.

"Well, and what is he like?—is he a chap easy to deal with?—is he any way deep?"

"He's as proud as Lucifer—that's all I can make out of him; and there are few things harder to manage than real pride."

"Ay, if you can't get round it," said Driscoll, with a sly twinkle of the eye.

"I have no time for such management," said Dunn, stiffly.

"Well, how did he take what you said to him? Did he seem as if he'd enter into the business kindly?"

"You don't suppose that I spoke to him about his family or his fortune, do you? Is it in a chance meeting like this that I could approach a subject full of difficulty and complication? You have rare notions of delicacy and address, Driscoll!"

"God help me! I'm a poor crayture, but somehow I get along for all that, and I'm generally as far on my road at the end of the day as them that travels with four poststers."

"You'd make a pretty mess of whatever required a light hand and a fine touch, that I can tell you. The question here lies between a Peer of the realm with twelve thousand a year, and a retired soldier with eightpence a day pension. It does not demand much thought to see where the balance inclines."

"You're forgetting one trifling matter. Who has the right to be the Peer with the twelve thousand a year?"

"I am not forgetting it; I was going to it when you stopped me. Until we have failed in obtaining our terms from Lord Lackington——"

"Ay, but what are the terms?" broke in Driscoll, eagerly.

"If you interrupt me thus at every moment, I shall never be able to explain my meaning. The terms are for yourself to name; you may write the figures how you please. As for me, I have views that in no way clash with yours. And to resume: until we fail with the Viscount, we have no need of the soldier. All that we have to think of as regards Conway is, that he falls into no hands but our own, that he should never learn anything of his claim, nor be within reach of such information till the hour when we ourselves think fit to make it known to him——"

"He oughtn't to keep company with that daughter of Paul Kellett, then," broke in Driscoll. "There's not a family history in the kingdom she hasn't by heart."

"I have thought of that already, and there is some danger of such an occurrence."

"As how?"

"Young Conway is at this very moment plotting how she may be domesticated with his mother, somewhere in Wales, I believe."

"If he's in love with her, it will be a bad business," said Driscoll. "She does be reading, and writing, too, from morning till night. There's no labour nor fatigue she's not equal to, and all the searches and inquiries that weary others she'd go into out of pure amusement. Now, if she was ever to be with his mother, and heard the old woman talk about family history she'd be at it hard and fast next morning."

"There is no need she should go there."

"No. But she musn't go—must never see her."

"I think I can provide for that. It will be somewhat more difficult to take him out of the way for the present. I wish he were back in the Crimea."

"He might get killed——"

"Ay, but his claim would not die. Look here, Driscoll," said he, slowly; "I ventured to tell him this morning that I would assist him with my influence if he wishes to re-enter the service as an officer, and he resented the offer at once as a liberty. Now, it might be managed in another way. Leave me to think it over, and perhaps I can hit upon the expedient. The Attorney-General is to report upon the claims to me to-morrow, next day I'm to see Conway himself, and then you shall learn all."

"I don't like all these delays," began Driscoll; but at a look from Dunn he stopped, and held down his head, half angry, half abashed.

"You advance small loans of money on approved security, Driscoll," said Dunn, with a dry expression of the mouth. "Perhaps some of these mornings you may be applied to for a few hundreds by a young fellow wishing to purchase his commission—you understand me?"

"I believe I do," said Driscoll, with a significant smile.

"You'll not be too hard on him for the terms, especially if he has any old family papers to deposit as security—eh?"

"Just so—just so. A mere nominal guarantee," said Driscoll, still laughing. "Oh, dear! but it's a queer world, and one has to work his wits hard to live in it." And with this philosophic explanation of life's trials, Mr. Driscoll took his leave of Dunn, and walked homeward.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE OSTEND PACKET.

It was a wild, stormy night, with fast flying clouds above, and a heavy rolling sea below, as the *Osprey* steamed away for Ostend, her closed hatchways and tarpaulined sailors, as well as her sea-washed deck and dripping cordage, telling there was "dirty weather outside." Though the waves broke over the vessel as she lay at anchor, and the short distance between the shore and her gangway had to be effected at peril of life, the captain had his mail, and was decided on sailing. There were but three passengers: two went aboard with the captain, the third was already on deck when they arrived, and leisurely paraded up and down with his cigar, stopping occasionally to look at the lights on shore, or cast a glance towards the wild chaos of waves that raged without.

"Safe now, I suppose, Grog?" muttered Beecher, as the vessel, loosed from her last mooring, turned head to sea out of the harbour.

"I rather suspect you are," said Davis, as he struck a light for his cigar. "Few fellows would like to swim out here with a judge's warrant in his mouth such a night as this."

"I don't like it overmuch myself," said Beecher; "there's a tremendous sea out there, and she's only a cockleshell after all."

"A very tidy one, Sir, in a sea, I promise you," said the Captain, overhearing, while with his trumpet he bellowed forth some directions to the sailors.

"You've no other passengers than ourselves, have you?" asked Beecher.

"Only that gentleman yonder," whispered the Captain, pointing towards the stranger.

"Few, I take it, fancy coming out in such weather," said Beecher.

"Very few, Sir, if they haven't uncommonly strong reasons for crossing the water," replied the Captain.

"I think he had you there!" growled Grog in his ear. "Don't you go poking nonsense at fellows like that. Shut up, I tell you! shut up!"

"I begin to feel it deuced cold here," said Beecher, shuddering.

"Come down below, then, and have something hot. I'll make a brew and turn in," said Davis, as he moved towards the ladder. "Come along."

"No, I must keep the deck, no matter how cold it is. I suffer dreadfully when I go below. Send me up a tumbler of rum-and-water, Davis, as hot as may be."

"You'd better take your friend's advice, Sir," said the Captain. "It will be dirty weather out there, and you'll be snugger under cover." Beecher, however, declined; and the Captain, crossing the deck, repeated the same counsel to the other passenger.

"No, I thank you," said he, gaily; "but if one of your men could spare me a cloak or a cape, I'd be much obliged, for I am somewhat ill-provided against wet weather."

"I can let you have a rug, with pleasure," said Beecher, overhearing the request; while he drew from a recess beneath the binnacle one of those serviceable aids to modern travel in the shape of a strong woollen blanket.

"I accept your offer most willingly, and the more so as I suspect I have had the honour of being presented to you," said the stranger. "Do I address Mr. Annesley Beecher?"

"Eh?—I'm not aware—I'm not quite sure, by this light," began Beecher, in considerable embarrassment, which the other as quickly perceived, and remedied by saying,

"I met you at poor Kellett's. My name is Conway."

"Oh, Conway—all right," said Beecher, laughing. "I was afraid you might be a 'dark horse,' as we say. Now that I know your colours, I'm easy again."

Conway laughed too at the frankness of the confession, and they turned to walk the deck together.

"You mentioned Kellett. He's gone 'toes up,' isn't he?" said Beecher.

"He is dead, poor fellow," said Conway, gravely. "I expected to have met you at his funeral."

"So I should have been had it come off on a Sunday," said Beecher, pleasantly; "but as in seeing old Paul 'tucked in' they might have nabbed me, I preferred being reported absent without leave."

"These were strong reasons, doubtless," said Conway, dryly.

"I liked the old fellow, too," said Beecher; "he was a bit of a bore, to be sure, about Arayo Molinos, and Albuera, and Soult, and Beresford, and the rest of 'em, but he was a rare good one to help a fellow at a pinch, and hospitable as a prince."

"That I'm sure of!" chimed in Conway.

"I know it—I can swear to it;—I used to dine with him every Sunday, regularly as the day came. I'll never forget those little tough legs of mutton—wherever he found them there's no saying—and those hard pellets of capers, like big swan-shot, washed down with table beer and whisky-grog, and poor Kellett thinking all the while he was giving you haunch of venison and red hermitage."

"He'd have given them just as freely if he had them," broke in Conway, half gruffly.

"That he would! He did so when he had it to give—at least, so they tell me, for I never saw the old place at Kellett's Town, or Castle Kellett——"

"Kellett's Court was the name."

"Ay, to be sure, Kellett's Court. I wonder how I could forget it, for I'm sure I heard it often enough."

One forgets many a thing they ought to remember," said Conway, significantly.

"Hit him again, he hasn't got no friends!" broke in Beecher, laughing jovially at this rebuke of himself. "You mean, that I ought to have had a fresher memory about all old Paul's kindnesses, and you're right there; but if you knew how hard the world has hit *me*, how hot they've been giving it to me these years back, you'd perhaps not lean so heavily on me. Since the Epsom of '42," said he, solemnly, "I never had one chance, not one, I pledge you my sacred word of honour. I've had my little 'innings,' you know, like every one else—punted for five-pun notes with the small ones, but never a real chance. Now, I call that hard, deuced hard."

"I suppose it *is* hard," said Conway; but really it would have been very difficult to say in what sense his words should be taken.

"And when a fellow finds himself always on the wrong side of the road," said Beecher, who now fancied that he was taking a moralist's view of life, and spoke with a philosophic solemnity—"I say, when a fellow sees that, do what he will, he's never on the right horse, he begins to be soured with the world, and to think that it's all a regular 'cross.' Not that I ever gave in.

No! ask any of the fellows up at Newmarket—ask the whole ring—ask——” he was going to say Grog Davis, when he suddenly remembered the heavy judgment Conway had already fulminated on that revered authority, and then, quickly correcting himself, he said, “Ask any of the ‘legs’ you like what stuff A. B.’s made of—if he ain’t hammered iron, and no mistake!”

“But what do you mean when you say you never gave in?” asked Conway, half sternly.

“What do I mean?” said Beecher, repeating the words, half stunned by the boldness of the question—“what do I mean? Why, I mean that they never saw me ‘down,’—that no man can say Annesley Beecher ever said ‘die.’ Haven’t I had my soup piping hot—spiced and peppered, too! Wasn’t I in for a pot on Blue Nose, when Mope ran a dead heat with Balshazzar for the Cloudeslie—fifteen to three in fifties twice over, and my horse running in bandages, and an ounce of corrosive sublimate in his stomach! Well, you’d not believe it—I don’t ask any one to believe it that didn’t see it—but I was as cool as I am here, and I walked up to Lady Tinkerton’s drag and ate a sandwich; and when she said, ‘Oh! Mr. Beecher, do come and tell me what to bet on,’ I said to her, ‘Quicksilver’s the fastest of metals, but don’t back it just now.’ They had it all over the course in half an hour: ‘Quicksilver’s the fastest of metals——’”

“I’m afraid I don’t quite catch your meaning.”

“It was alluding to the bucketing, you know. They’d just given Blue Nose corrosive sublimate, which is a kind of quicksilver.”

“Oh! I perceive,” said Conway.

“Good—wasn’t it?” said Beecher, chuckling. “Let A. B. alone to ‘sarve them out,’—that’s what all the legs said!” And then he heaved a little sigh, as though to say, “That, after all, even wit and smartness were only a vanity and a vexation of spirit, and that a ‘good book’ was better than them all.”

“I detest the whole concern,” said Conway. “So long as gentlemen bred and trained to run their horses in honourable rivalry, it was a noble sport, and well became the first squirearchy of the world; but when it degenerated into a field for every crafty knave and trickster—when the low cunning of the gambler succeeded to the bold daring of the true lover of racing—then, the turf became no better than the *rouge et noir* table, without even the poor consolation of thinking that chance was any element in the result.”

"Why, what would you have? It's a game where the best player wins, that's all," broke in Beecher.

"If you mean it is always a contest where the best horse carries away the prize, I enter my denial to the assertion. If it were so, the legs would have no existence, and all that classic vocabulary of 'nobbling,' 'squaring,' and so on, have no dictionary."

"It's all the same the whole world over," broke in Beecher. "The wide awake ones will have the best seat on the coach."

Conway made no reply, but the increased energy with which he puffed his cigar bespoke the impatience he was suffering under."

"What became of the daughter?" asked Beecher, abruptly, and then, not awaiting the answer, went on: "A deuced good-looking girl, if properly togged out, but she hadn't the slightest notion of dressing herself."

"Their narrow fortune may have had something to say to that," said Conway, gravely.

"Where there's a will there's a way—that's my idea. I was never so hard up in life but I could make my tailor turn me out like a gentleman. I take it," added he, returning to the former theme, "she was a proud one. Old Kellett was awfully afraid of doing many a thing from the dread of her knowing it. He told me so himself."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Conway, with evident pleasure in the tone.

"I could have helped him fifty ways. I knew fellows who would have 'done' his bills—small sums, of course—and have shoved him along pleasantly enough, but *she* wouldn't have it at any price."

"I was not aware of that," remarked Conway, inviting by his manner further revelations.

Beecher, however, mistaking the source of the interest he had thus excited, and believing that his own craft and shrewdness were the qualities that awakened respect, went on to show how conversant he was with all financial operations amongst Jews and money-lenders, proudly declaring that there was not a "man on town" knew the cent. per centers as he did.

"I've had my little dealings with them," said he, with some vanity in the manner. "I've had my paper done when there wasn't a fellow on the 'turf' could raise a guinea. You see," added he, lowering his voice to a whisper that implied secrecy, "I could do them a service no money could repay. I was up to

all that went on in life, and at the clubs. When Etheridge got it so heavy at the 'Rag,' I warned Fordyce not to advance him beyond a hundred or two. I was the only gentleman knew Brookdale's horse could win 'the Ripsley.' The legs, of course, knew it well before the race came off. Jemmy could have had ten thousand down for his 'book.' Ah! if you and I had only known each other six years ago, what a stroke of work we might have done together! Even now," said he, with increased warmth of voice, "there's a deuced deal to be done abroad. Brussels and Florence are far from worked out—not among the foreigners, of course, but our own fellows—the young Oxford and Cambridge 'saps'—the green ones waiting for their gazette in the Guards! Where are you bound for?—what are you doing?" asked he, as if a sudden thought had crossed his mind.

"I am endeavouring to get back to the Crimea," said Conway, smiling at the prospect which the other had with such frankness opened to him.

"The Crimea!" exclaimed Beecher, "why that is downright madness; they're fighting away there just as fresh as ever. The very last paper I saw is filled with an account of a Russian sortie against our lines, and a lot of our fellows killed and wounded."

"Of course there are hard knocks——"

"It's all very well to talk of it that way, but I think you might have been satisfied with what you saw. I'd just as soon take a cab down to Guy's, or the Middlesex Hospital, and ask one of the house-surgeons to cut me up at his own discretion, as go amongst those Russian savages. I tell you it don't pay—not a bit of it!"

"I suppose, as to the paying part, you're quite right; but remember, there are different modes of estimating the same thing. Now, I like soldiering——"

"No accounting for tastes," broke in Beecher. "I knew a fellow who was so fond of the Queen's Bench Prison he wouldn't let his friends clear him out; but, seriously speaking, the Crimea's a bad book."

"I should be a very happy fellow to-night if I knew how I could get back there. I've been trying in various ways for employment in any branch of the service. I'd rather be a driver in the Wagon Train than whip the neatest four-in-hand over Epsom Downs."

"There's only one name for that," said Beecher, "at least out of Hanwell."

"I'd be content to be thought mad on such terms," said Conway, good-humouredly, "and not even quarrel with those who said so!"

"I've got a better scheme than the Crimea in my head," said Beecher, in a low, cautious voice, like one afraid of being overheard. "I've half a mind to tell you, though there's one on board here would come down pretty heavily on me for peaching."

"Don't draw any indignation on yourself on *my* account," said Conway, smiling. "I'm quite unworthy of the confidence, and utterly unable to profit by it."

"I'm not so sure of that," responded Beecher. "A fellow who has got it so hot as you have, has always his eyes open ever after. Come a little to this side," whispered he, cautiously. "Did you remark my going forward two or three times when I came on board?"

"Yes, I perceived that you did so."

"You never guessed why?"

"No; really I paid no particular attention to it."

"I'll tell you then," whispered he, still lower, "it was to look after a horse I've got there. 'Mumps,' that ran such a capital second for the Yarmouth, and ran a dead heat afterwards with Stanley's 'Cross-Bones,' he's there!" and his voice trembled between pride and agitation.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Conway, amused at the eagerness of his manner.

"There he is, disguised as a prize bull for the King of Belgium. Nobody suspects him—nobody could suspect him, he's so well got up, horns and all. Got him on board in the dark in a large roomy box, clap posters to it on the other side, and 'tool' him along to Brussels. That's what I call business! Now, if you wait a week or two, you can lay on him as deep as you like. We'll let the Belgians 'in,' before we've done with them. We run him under the name of 'Klepper'—don't forget it, Klepper!"

"I've already told you I'm unworthy of such a confidence; you only risk yourself when you impart a secret to indiscretion like mine."

"You'd not blow us?" cried Annesley, in terror.

"The best security against my doing so accidentally is, that I may be hundreds of miles away before your races come off."

For a minute or two Beecher's misery was extreme. He saw how his rashness had carried him away to a foolish act of good-nature, and had not even reaped thanks for his generosity. What

would he not have given to recal his words?—what would he not have done to obliterate their impression? At last a sudden thought seemed to strike him, and he said,

"There are two of us in 'the lay,' and my 'pal' is the readiest pistol in Europe."

"I'll not provoke any display of his skill, depend on't," said Conway, controlling as well as he could the inclination to laugh out.

"He'd tumble you over like winking if you sold him. He'd make it as short work with myself if he suspected *me*."

"I'd rather have a quieter sort of colleague," said Conway, dryly.

"Oh! but he's a rare one to 'work the oracle.' Soloman was a wise man——"

"What infernal balderdash are you at with Soloman and Samson, there?" shouted out Grog Davis, who had just been looking after the horse-box in the bow. "Come down below, and have a glass of brandy-and-water."

"I'll stay where I am," said Beecher, sulkily, and walked away in dudgeon from the spot.

"I think I recognise your friend's voice," said Conway, when Beecher next joined him. If I'm right, its a fellow I've an old grudge against."

"Don't have it out, then—that's all," broke in Beecher, hastily. "I'd just as soon go into a cage and dispute a bone with one of Van Amburgh's tigers, as I'd 'bring *him* to book.'"

"Make your mind easy about that," said Conway. "I never go in search of old scores. I would only say, don't leave yourself more in his power than you can easily escape from. As for myself, it's very unlikely I shall ever see him again."

"I wish you'd give up the Crimea," said Beecher, who, by one of the strange caprices of his strange nature, began to feel a sort of liking for Conway.

"Why should I give it up? It's the only career I'm fit for—if I even be fit for that, which, indeed, the Horse Guards don't seem to think. But I've got an old friend in the Piedmontese service who is going out in command of the cavalry, and I'm on my way now to Turin to see whether he cannot make me something—anything, in short, from an aide-de-camp to an orderly. Once before the enemy, it matters wonderfully little what rank a man holds."

"The chances of being knocked over are pretty much alike," said Beecher, "if that's what you mean."

"Not exactly," said Conway, laughing—"not exactly, though even in *that* respect the calculation is equal."

They now walked the deck step for step together in silence. The conversation had arrived at that point whence, if not actually confidential, it could proceed no further without becoming so, and so each appeared to feel it, and yet neither was disposed to lead the way. Beecher was one of those men who regard the chance persons they meet with in life just as they would accidental spots where they halt when on a journey—little localities to be enjoyed at the time, and never, in all likelihood, revisited. In this way, they obtained far more of his confidence than if he was sure to be in constant habits of intercourse with them. He felt they were safe depositories, just as he would have felt a lonely spot in a wood a secure hiding-place for whatever he wanted to conceal. Now he was already—we are unable to say why—disposed to like Conway, and he would gladly have revealed to him much that lay heavily at his heart—many a weighty care—many a sore misgiving. There was yet remaining in his nature that reverence and respect for honesty of character which survives very often a long course of personal debasement, and he felt that Conway was a man of honour. Such men he very well knew were usually duped and done—they were the victims of the sharp set he himself fraternised with, but, with all that, there was something about them that he still clung to, just as he might have clung to a reminiscence of his boy-days.

"I take it," said he, at last, "that each of us have caught it as heavily as most fellows going. *You*, to be sure, worse than myself—for I was only a younger son."

"*My* misfortunes," said Conway, "were all of my own making. I squandered a very good fortune in a few years, without ever so much as suspecting I was in any difficulty; and after all, the worst recollection of the past is, how few kindnesses—how very few good-natured things a fellow does when he leads a life of mere extravagance. I have enriched many a money-lender, I have started half a dozen rascally servants into smart hotel-keepers, but I can scarcely recal five cases of assistance given to personal friends. The truth is, the most selfish fellow in the world is the spendthrift."

"That's something new to me, I must own," said Beecher, thoughtfully; but Conway paid no attention to the remark. "My notion is this," said Beecher, after a pause, "do what you will—say what you will—the world won't play fair with you!"

Conway shook his head dissentingly, but made no reply, and another and a longer silence ensued.

"You don't know my brother Lackington?" said Beecher, at length.

"No. I have met him in the world, and at clubs, but don't know him."

"I'll engage, however, you've always heard him called a clever fellow, a regular sharp fellow, and all that, just because he's the Viscount; but he is, without exception, the greatest flat going—never saw his way to a good thing yet, and if you told him of one was sure to spoil it. I'm going over to see him now," added he, after a pause.

"He's at Rome, I think, the newspapers say?"

"Yes, he's stopping there for the winter." Another pause followed, and Beecher threw away the end of his cigar, and sticking an unlighted one in his mouth, walked the deck in deep deliberation. "I'd like to put a case to you for your opinion," said he, as though screwing himself to a great effort. "If you stood next to a good fortune—next in reversion, I mean—and that there was a threat—just a threat, and no more—of a suit to contest your right, would you accept of a life interest in the property to avoid all litigation, and secure a handsome income for your own time?"

"You put the case too vaguely. First of all, a mere threat would not drive me to a compromise."

"Well, call it more than a threat; say that actual proceedings had been taken—not that I believe they have—but just say so."

"The matter is too complicated for my mere Yes or No to meet it; but on the simple question of whether I should compromise a case of that nature, I'd say No. I'd not surrender my right if I had one, and I'd not retain possession of that which didn't belong to me."

"Which means, that you'd reject the offer of a life interest?"

"Yes, on the terms you mention."

"I believe you're right. Put the bold face on, and stand the battle. Now the real case is this. My brother Lackington has just been served with notice——"

Just as Beecher had uttered the last word, his arm, which rested on the binnacle against which he was standing, was grasped with such force that he almost cried out with the pain, and at the same instant a muttered curse fell upon his ear.

"Go on," said Conway, as he waited to hear more.

Beecher muttered some unintelligible words about feeling

suddenly chilled, and "wanting a little brandy," and disappeared down the stairs to the cabin.

"I heard you," cried Davis, as soon as the other entered—"I heard you! and if I hadn't heard you with my own ears, I'd not have believed it! Haven't I warned you, not once but fifty times, against that confounded peaching tongue of yours—haven't I told you, that if every act of your life was as pure and honest as you know it is not, your own stupid talk would make an indictment against you? You meet a fellow on the deck of a steamer——"

"Stop there!" cried Beecher, whose temper was sorely tried by this attack, "the gentleman I talked with is an old acquaintance—he knows *me*, ay, and what's more, he knows *you*!"

"Many a man knows *me*, and does not feel himself much the better for his knowledge!" said Davis, boldly.

"Well, I believe our friend here wouldn't say he was the exception to that rule," said Beecher, with an ironical laugh.

"Who is he?—what's his name?"

"His name is Conway—he was a Lieutenant in the 12th Lancers; but you will remember him better as the owner of Sir Aubrey."

"I remember him perfectly," replied Davis, with all his own composure—"I remember him perfectly—a tall, good-looking fellow, with short moustaches. He was—except yourself—the greatest flat I ever met in the betting ring; and that's a strong word, Mr. Annesley Beecher—ain't it?"

"I suspect you'd scarcely like to call him a flat to-day, at least to his face," said Beecher, angrily.

A look of mingled insolence and contempt was all the answer Davis gave this speech, and then, half-filling a tumbler with brandy, he drank it off, and said slowly,

"What *I* would dare to do, *you* certainly would never suspect—that much I'm well aware of. What *you* would dare is easily guessed at."

"I don't clearly understand you," said Beecher, timidly.

"You'd dare to draw me into a quarrel on the chance of seeing me 'bowled over,'" said Davis, with a bitter laugh. "You'd dare to see me stand opposite another man's pistol, and pray heartily at the same time that his hand mightn't shake, nor his wrist falter; but I've got good business habits about me, Master Beecher. If you open that writing-desk, you'll own few men's papers are in better order, or more neatly kept; and there is no satisfaction I could have to offer any one, wouldn't give me

ample time to deposit in the hands of justice seven forged acceptances by the Honourable Annesley Beecher, and the power of attorney counterfeited by the same accomplished gentleman's hand."

Beecher put out his hand to catch the decanter of brandy; but Davis gently removed the bottle, and said, "No, no; that's only Dutch courage, man; nerve yourself up, and learn to stand straight and manfully, and when you say, 'Not guilty,' do it with a bold look at the jury box!"

Beecher dropped into his seat, and buried his head between his hands.

"I often think," said Davis, as he took out his cigar-case and proceeded to choose a cigar—"I often think it would be a fine sight when the swells—the fashionable world as the newspapers call them—would be pressing on to the Old Bailey to see one of their own set in the dock. What nobs there would be on the Bench. All Brookes's and the Wyndham scattered amongst the bar. The *Illustrated News* would have a photographic picture of you, and the descriptive fellows would come out strong about the way you recognised your former acquaintances in court. Egad! old Grog Davis would be quite proud to give his evidence in such company! 'How long have you been acquainted with the prisoner in the dock, Mr. Davis?' cried he, aloud, imitating the full and imperious accents of an examining counsel. 'I have known him upwards of fifteen years, my Lord. We went down together to Leeds in the summer of 1840 on a little speculation with coggled dice——'"

Beecher looked up and tried to speak, but his strength failed him, and his head fell heavily down again on the table.

"There, 'liquor up,' as the Yankees say," cried Davis, passing the decanter towards him. "You're a poor chicken-hearted creature, and don't do much honour to your 'order.'"

"You'll drive me to despair yet," muttered Beecher, in a voice scarcely above a whisper.

"Not a bit of it, man; there's pluck in despair! You'll never go that far!"

Beecher grasped his glass convulsively, and as his eyes flashed wildly, he seemed for a moment as if about to hurl it in the other's face. Davis's look, however, appeared to abash him, and with a low, faint sigh he relinquished his hold, while his head fell forward on his bosom.

Davis now drew near the fire, and with a leg on either side of it, smoked away at his ease.

CHAPTER XXVII

A VISIT OF CONDOLENCE.

"I THINK she will *see me*," said Davenport Dunn to the old woman servant who opened the door to him at the Kelletts' cottage, "if you will tell her my name: Mr. Dunn—Mr. Davenport Dunn."

"She told me she'd not see anybody, Sir," was the obdurate reply.

"Yes; but I think, when you say who it is——"

"She would not see that young man that was in the regiment with her brother, and he was here every day, wet or dry, to ask after her."

"Well, take in my card now, and I'll answer for it she'll not refuse me."

The old woman took the card half sulkily from his hand, and returned in a few minutes to say that Miss Kellett would receive him.

Dressed in mourning of the very humblest and cheapest kind, and with all the signs of recent suffering and sorrow about her, Sybella Kellett yet received Mr. Dunn with a calm and quiet composure for which he was scarcely prepared.

"If I have been importunate, Miss Kellett," said he, "it is because I desire to proffer my services to you. I feel assured that you will not take ill this assistance on my part, I would wish to be thought a friend——"

"You were so to my father, Sir," said she, interrupting, while she held her handkerchief to her eyes.

Dunn's face grew scarlet at these words, but fortunately for him, she could not see it.

"I had intended to have written to you, Sir," said she, with

recovered composure. "I tried to do so this morning, but my head was aching so, that I gave it up. I wanted your counsel, and indeed your assistance. I have no need to tell you that I'm left without means of support. I do not want to burden relatives, with whom, besides, I have had no intercourse for years; and my object was to ask if you could assist me to a situation as governess, or, if not, to something more humble still. I will not be difficult to please," said she, smiling sadly, "for my pretensions are of the very humblest."

"I'm aware how much you underrate them. I'm no stranger to Miss Kellett's abilities," said Dunn, bowing.

She scarcely moved her head in acknowledgment of this speech, and went on: "If you could ensure me immediate occupation, it would serve to extricate me from a little difficulty at this moment, and relieve me from the embarrassment of declining ungraciously what I cannot accept of. This letter here is an invitation from a lady in Wales to accept the hospitality of her house for the present; and however deeply the kindness touches me, I must not avail myself of it. You may read the letter," said she, handing it to him.

Dunn perused it slowly, and, folding it up, laid it on the table again.

"It is most kindly worded, and speaks well for the writer," said he, calmly.

"I feel all its kindness," said she, with a slight quivering of the lip. "It comes when such is doubly precious, but I have my reasons against accepting it."

"Without daring to ask, I can assume them, Miss Kellett. I am one of those who believe that all efforts in life, to be either good or great, should strike root in independence; that he who leans upon another, parts with the best features of identity, and loses himself in suiting his tastes to another's."

She made no reply, but a slight flush on her cheek, and an increased brightness in her eye, showed that she gave her full concurrence to the words.

"It is fortunate, Miss Kellett," said he, resuming, "that I am the bearer of a proposition which, if you approve of, meets the case at once. I have been applied to by Lord Glengariff to find a lady who would accept the situation of companion to his daughter. He has so far explained the requirements he seeks for, that I can answer for Miss Kellett being exactly everything to fulfil them."

"Oh, Sir!" broke she in, "this is in no wise what I desired.

I am utterly unfitted for such a sphere and such associations. Remember how and where my life has been passed. I have no knowledge of life, and no experience of society."

"Let me interrupt you. Lord Glengariff lives completely estranged from the world in a remote part of the country. Lady Augusta, his only unmarried daughter, is no longer young; they see no company; indeed, their fortune is very limited, and all their habits of the very simplest and least expensive. It was remembering this very seclusion, I was glad to offer you a retreat so likely to meet your wishes."

"But even my education is not what such persons would look for. I have not one of the graceful accomplishments that adorn society. My skill as a musician is very humble; I cannot sing at all; and though I can read some modern languages, I scarcely speak them."

"Do not ask me to say how much I am aware of your capacity and acquirements, Miss Kellett. It is about two months back a little volume came into my hands which had once been yours; how it ceased to be so I don't choose to confess; but it was a work on the industrial resources of Ireland, annotated and commented on by *you*. I have it still. Shall I own to you that your notes have been already used by me in my reports, and that I have adopted some of the suggestions in my recommendations to Government? Nay, if you doubt me, I will give you the proof."

"I left such a volume as you speak of at Mr. Hawkshaw's, and believed it had been mislaid."

It was deliberately stolen, Miss Kellett, that's the truth of it. Mr. Driscoll chanced to see the book, and happened to show it to me. I could not fail to be struck with it, the more as I discovered in your remarks hints and suggestions, coupled with explanations, that none had ever offered me."

"How leniently you speak of my presumption, Sir!"

"Say, rather, how sincerely I applaud your zeal and intelligence—the book bespeaks both. Now, when I read it, I wished at once to make your acquaintance. There were points wherein you were mistaken; there were others in which you evidently see further than any of us. I felt that if time, and leisure, and opportunity of knowledge were supplied, these were the studies in which you might become really proficient. Lord Glengariff's proposal came at the very moment. It was all I could desire for you—a quiet home, the society of those whose very breeding is acted kindliners."

"Oh, Sir! do not flatter me into the belief that I am worthy of such advantages."

"The station will gain most by your association with it, take my word for that."

How was it that these words sent a colour to her cheek and a courage to her heart that made her for a moment forget she was poor, and fatherless, and friendless? What was it, too, that made them seem less flattery than sound, just, and due acknowledgment? He that spoke them was neither young, nor handsome, nor fascinating in manner; and yet she felt his praise vibrate within her heart strangely and thrillingly.

He spoke much to her about her early life—what she had read, and how she was led to reflect upon themes so unlikely to attract a young girl's thoughts. By degrees, as her reserve wore off, she ventured to confess what a charm the great men of former days possessed for her imagination—how their devotion, their courage, their single-heartedness animated her with higher hopes for the time when Ireland should have the aid of those able to guide her destinies and make of her all that her great resources promised.

"The world of contemporaries is seldom just to these," said Dunn, gravely; "they excite envy rather than attract friendship, and then they have often few of the gifts which conciliate the prejudices around them."

"What matter if they can live down these prejudices?" cried she, warmly; then blushing at her own eagerness, she said, falteringly, "How have I dared to speak of these things, and to *you*?"

Dunn arose, and walked to the window, and now a long pause occurred, in which neither uttered a word.

"Is this cottage yours, Miss Kellett?" said he, at last.

"No; we had rented it, and the time expires in week or two."

"And the furniture?"

"It was hired also, except a very few articles of little or no value."

Dunn again turned away, and seemed lost in deep thought; then, in a voice of some uncertainty and hesitation, said: "Your father's affairs were complicated and confused—there were questions of law, too, to be determined about them—so that, for the present, there is no saying exactly how they stand; still there will be a sum—a small one, unfortunately, but still a sum available to you, which, for present convenience, you must allow me to advance to you."

"You forget, Sir, that I have a brother. To him, of right, belongs anything that remains to us."

"I had, indeed, forgotten that," said Dunn, in some confusion, "and it was just of him I wanted now to speak. He is serving as a soldier with a Rifle regiment in the Crimea. Can nothing be done to bring him favourably before the notice of his superiors? His gallantry has already attracted notice, but, as his real station is still unknown, his advancement has been merely that accorded to the humblest merits. I will attend to it. I'll write about him this very day."

"How I thank you!" cried she, fervently; and she bent down and pressed her lips to his hand.

A cold shivering passed over Dunn as he felt the hot tears that fell upon his hand, and a strange sense of weakness oppressed him.

"It will make your task the lighter," cried she, eagerly, "to know that Jack is a soldier in heart and soul—brave, daring, and high-hearted, but with a nature gentle as a child's. There was a comrade of his here, the other day, one whose life he saved——"

"I have seen Conway," said Dunn, drily, while he scanned her features closely.

No change of colour nor voice showed that she felt the scrutiny, and in a calm tone she went on: "I know so little of these things, that I do not know if my dear brother were made an officer to-morrow whether his want of private fortune would prevent his acceptance of the rank, but there surely must be steps of advancement open to men poor as he is."

"You may trust all to me," interrupted Dunn. "Once that you consider me as your guardian, I will neglect nothing that concerns you."

"Oh, how have I deserved such kindness!" cried she, trying to smother her emotion.

"You must call me your guardian, too, and write to me as such. The world is of such a temper that it will serve you to be thought my ward. Even Lady Augusta Arden herself will feel the force of it." There was a kind of rude energy in the way these last words were uttered that gave them a character almost defiant.

"You are then decided that I ought to take the situation?" said she. And already her manner had assumed the deference of one seeking direction.

"Yes, for the present, it is all that could be desired. There

will be no necessity of your continuing there if it should ever be irksome to you. Upon this, as upon all else, I trust you will communicate freely with me."

"I should approach an actual duty—a task—with far more confidence than I feel in offering to accommodate myself to the ways and tempers of utter strangers."

"Very true," said he; "but when I have told you about them they will be strangers no longer. People are easily comprehended who have certain strong ruling passions. They have only one, and that the very simplest of all motives—Pride. Let me tell you of them." And so he drew his chair to her side and began to describe the Ardens.

We do not ask the reader to follow Davenport Dunn in his sketch—enough that we say his picture was more truthful than flattering, for he portrayed traits that had often given him offence and suffering. He tried to speak with a sort of disinterested coldness—a kind of half-pitying indifference about "ways and notions" that people estranged from "much intercourse with the world *will* fall into;" but his tone was, in spite of himself, severe and resentful, and scarcely compensated by his concluding words, "though of course, to *you*, they will be amiable and obliging."

"How I wish I could see them, though only for a minute," said she, as he finished.

"Have you such confidence, then, in your power of detecting character at sight?" asked he, with a keen and furtive glance.

"My gift is generally enough for my own guidance," said she, frankly; "but, to be sure, it has only been exercised amongst the country people, and they have fewer disguises than those we call their betters."

"I may write word, then, that within a week you will be ready," said Dunn, rising. "You will find in that pocket-book enough for any immediate outlay—nay, Miss Kellett, it is your own—I repeat it, all your own. I am your guardian, and no more." And with a stiffness of manner that almost repelled gratitude, he took his leave and withdrew. As he gained the door, however, he stopped, and, after a moment, came back into the room. "I should like to see you again before you leave—there are topics I would like to speak with you on. May I come in a day or two?"

"Whenever, and as often as you please."

Dunn took her hand and pressed it tenderly. A deep crimson overspread her face as she said "Good-by!" and the carriage had rolled away ere she knew that he was gone.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE HERMITAGE AT GLENGARIFF.

BESIDE a little arm of the sea, and surrounded by lofty mountains, stood the cottage of Lord Glengariff. It was originally built as a mere fishing-lodge, a resting-place in the bathing season, or a spot to visit when it was the pleasure of its owners to affect retirement and seclusion. Then would the Earl and his Countess, and the Ladies Julia and Jemima, come down to the Hermitage with a sort of self-approving humility, that seemed to say, "Even *we* know how to chastise pride, and vanity, and the sinful lusts of the flesh." Whether it was that these seasons of mortification became more frequent, or that they required more space, we cannot say, but, in course of time, the Hermitage extended its limbs, first in one direction and then in another, till at length it grew to be a very commodious house, with ample rooms, and every imaginable comfort. Owing to the character of the architecture, too, it gained in picturesque effect by these successive additions; and in its jutting projections, its deep-shadowed courts, and its irregular line of roof, it presented a very pleasing specimen of that half-Elizabethian cottage so rarely hit upon in any regular plan.

As the fortunes of the noble house declined—the Earl's ancestors had been amongst the most extravagant of Irish gentry—the ancient castle of Holt-Glengariff, where they had long resided, was sold, and the family settled down to live at the Hermitage. At first the change was supposed to be merely temporary—"they were going to live in London, or in Brighton; they were about to establish themselves in Paris; her Ladyship was ordered to Italy"—a variety of rumours, in fact, were afloat to explain that the sunshine of their presence in that lonely glen would be but brief and short-lived. All the alterations that

might be made in the cottage or its grounds, all the facilities of approach by land and water, all the beneficial changes in the village itself, were alluded to as projects for the day when they would come back there, for my Lord said he "really liked the place"—a species of avowal that was accepted by the neighbourhood as the proudest encomium man could pronounce upon their "happy valley."

With all these plans and intentions, it was now eighteen years and the Earl had never quitted the Hermitage for any longer journey than an occasional trip to Dublin. The Countess had taken a longer road than that over the Alps, and lay at rest in the village churchyard. The Ladies Georgina, Arabella, and Julia had married off, and none remained but Lady Augusta Arden, of whom we have already made brief mention to our readers in a former chapter.

We did but scant justice to Lady Augusta when we said that she had once been handsome: she was so still. She had fine eyes, and fine teeth; a profusion of brown hair of the very silkiest; her figure was singularly graceful; and, bating a degree of haughtiness—a family trait—her manner was unexceptionably good and pleasing. Both the Earl and his daughter had lived too long amongst those greatly inferior to them in rank and fortune not to conceive a very exaggerated estimate of themselves.

No Pasha was ever more absolute than my Lord in the little village beside him; his will was a sort of firman that none dreamed of disputing; and, indeed, the place men occupied in the esteem of their fellows there, was little else than a reflex of how they were regarded at the Hermitage. We never scruple to bestow a sort of derisive pity upon the savage who, having carved his deity out of a piece of wood, sits down to worship him; and yet, what an unconscious imitation of the red man is all our adulation of great folks! We follow him to the very letter, not only in investing the object of our worship with a hundred qualities that he has not, but we make him the butt of our evil passions, and in the day of our anger and disappointment we turn round and rend him! Not that the villagers ever treated my Lord in this wise—they were still in the stage "of worship"—they had been at "their offices," fathers and grandfathers, for many a year, and though some were beginning to complain that their knees were getting sore, none dreamed of getting on their legs! The fact was, that even they who liked the religion least, thought it was not worth while abjuring the faith of their

fathers, especially when they could not guess what was to replace it; and so my Lord dictated, and decided, and pronounced for the whole neighbourhood; and Lady Augusta doctored, and model-schooled, and loan-funded them to her heart's content. Nay, we are wrong! It was all in the disappointed dreariness of an unsatisfied heart that she took to benevolence! O, dear! what a sorry search is that after motives, if one only knew how much philanthropy and active charity have come of a breach of promise to marry! Not that Lady Augusta had ever stood in this position, but either that she had looked too high, or was too hard to please, or from some other cause, but she never married.

The man who has no taste for horsemanship, consoles himself for the unenjoyed pleasure by reading of the fractured ribs and smashed collar-bones of the hunting-field. Was it in something of this spirit that Lady Augusta took an especial delight in dwelling in her mind and in her letters on all the disagreeables of her sisters' wedded life? The extravagance of men, their selfishness, their uncomplying habits, the odious tyranny of their tempers, were favourite themes with her, dashed with allusions to every connubial contingency, from alimony to the measles in the nursery! At last, possibly because, by such frequent recurrence to the same subjects, she had no longer anything new to say on them, or perhaps—it is just possible—the themes themselves had less interest for others than for herself, her sisters seemed to reply less regularly than of old. Their answers were shorter and drier; they appeared neither to care so much for sympathy and condolence as formerly; and, in fact, as Lady Augusta said to herself, "They were growing inured to ill-treatment!" And if half of us in this world only knew of the miseries we are daily suffering, and which sympathetic friends are crying over, what a deal of delightful affliction might we enjoy that we now are dead to! What oppressive governments do we live under—what cruel taskmasters—what ungrateful publics, not to speak of the more touching sorrows of domestic life—the undervaluing parents and unsympathising wives! Well, one thing is a comfort; there are dear kind hearts in mourning over all these for us, anxiously looking for the day we may awaken to a sense of our own misery!

It was of a cheery spring morning, sunlit and breezy, when in the chirping songs of birds, the rustling leaves, and fast-flowing rivulets, Nature seems to enjoy a more intense vitality, that the Earl sat at breakfast with his daughter. A fairer prospect could

hardly be seen than that which lay before the open windows in front of them. The green lawn, dotted with clumps of ancient trees, inclined with many a waving slope to the sea, which, in a long, narrow arm, pierced its way between two jutting headlands, the one bold, rocky, and precipitous, the other grass-covered and flowery, reflecting its rich tints in the glassy water beneath. The sea was, indeed, calm and still as any lake, and, save when a low, surging sound arose within some rocky cavern, as silent and noiseless. The cattle browsed down to the very water's edge, and the nets of the fishermen hung to dry over the red-berried foliage of the arbutus. They who looked—when they did, perchance, look on this scene—gazed with almost apathy on it. Their eyes never brightened as the changing sunlight cast new effects upon the scene. Nor was this indifference the result of any unconsciousness of its beauty. A few months back it was the theme of all their praises. Landscape-painters and photographers were invited specially to catch its first morning tints, its last mellow glow at sunset. The old Lord said it was finer than Sorrento—equal to anything in Greece. If the Mediterranean were bluer, where was there such emerald verdure?—where such blended colouring of heaths, purple, and blue, and violet?—in what land did the fragrance of the white thorn so load the warm atmosphere? Such, and such like, were the encomiums they were wont to utter; and wherefore was it that they uttered them no more? The explanation is a brief one. A commission, or a deputation, or a something as important, had come down to examine Bantry Bay, and investigate its fitness to become a packet station for America. In the course of this examination, a scientific member of the body had strayed down to Glengariff, where, being of a speculative as well as of a scientific turn, he was struck by its immense capabilities. What a gem it was, and what might it not be made! It was Ireland in the tropics—"the Green Isle" in the Indian Ocean! Only imagine such a spot converted into a watering-place! With a lodge for the Queen on that slope sheltered by the ilex-copse, crescents, and casinos, and yacht stations, and ornamental villas rose on every side by his descriptive powers, and the old Earl—for he was dining with him—saw at one glance how he had suddenly become a benefactor of mankind and a millionaire. "That little angle of the shore, yonder, my Lord—the space between the pointed rock and the stone pine-trees—is worth fifty thousand pounds; the crescent that would stand there would leave many an untenanted house at Kemp Town. I'll engage myself to get you a thousand guineas

for that small bit of table-land to the right—the Duke of Uxmoro is only waiting to hit upon such a spot. Here, too, where we sit, must be the hydropathic establishment. You can't help it, my Lord, you must comply. This park will bring you in a princely revenue. It is gold—actual gold—every foot of it! There's not a Swiss cottage in these woods won't pay cent. per cent.!”

Mr. Galbraith—such was his name—was of that pictorially-gifted order of which the celebrated George Robins was once chief. He knew how to dress his descriptions with the double attraction of the picturesque and the profitable, so that trees seemed to bend under golden fruit, and the sea-washed rocks looked like “nuggets.”

If there be something very seductive in the prospect of growing immensely rich all at once, there is a terrible compensation in the utter indifference inflicted on us as to all our accustomed pleasures in life. The fate of Midas seems at once our own; there is nothing left to us but that one heavy and shining metal of all created blessedness! Lord Glengariff was wont to enjoy the lonely spot he lived in with an intense appreciation of its beauty. He never wearied of watching the changing effects of season on a scene so full of charm; but now he surveyed it with a sense of figety impatience, eager for the time when the sounds of bustle and business should replace the stillness that now reigned around him.

“This is from Dunn,” said he, breaking open a large, heavy-sealed letter, which had just arrived. His eyes ran hastily along it, and he exclaimed, peevishly, “No prospectus yet—no plan issued—nothing whatever announced. ‘I have seen Galbraith, and had some conversation with him about your harbour.’ My harbour!”

“Go on,” said Lady Augusta, mildly.

“Why, the insolent upstart has not even listened to what was said to him. My harbour! He takes it for granted that we were wanting to make this a packet station for America, and he goes on to say that the place has none of the requisite qualifications—no depth of water! I wish the fellow were at the bottom of it! Really this is intolerable. Here is a long lecture to me not to be misled by those ‘speculation-mongers who are amongst the ripe products of our age.’ I ask you, if you ever heard of impertinence like that? This fellow—the arch-charlatan of his day—the quack par excellence of his nation—dares to warn *me* against the perils of his class and kindred! Only listen to this Gusty,” cried he, bursting into a fit of half-angry laughter:

"'I am disposed to think that, by drawing closer to the present party in power, you could serve your interests much more effectively than by embarking in any schemes of mere material benefit. Allington'—he actually calls him Allington!—'dropped hints to this effect in a confidential conversation we held last evening together, and I am in hopes that, when we meet, you will enter into our views.' Are the coronets of the nobility to be put up to sale like the acres of the squirearchy? or what is it this fellow is driving at?" cried he, flinging down the letter in a rage, and walking up and down the room. "The rule of O'Connell and his followers was mild, and gentle, and forbearing, compared with the sway of these fellows. In the one case we had a fair stand-up fight—opinion met opinion, and the struggle was an open one—but here we have an organised association to investigate the state of our resources, to pry into our private affairs, learning what pressure bears upon us here, what weak spot gives way there. They hold our creditors in leash, to slip them on us at any moment; and the threat of a confiscation—for it is just that, and nothing less—is unceasingly hanging over us!"

He stopped short in his torrent of passion, for the white sail of a small fishing craft that just showed in the offing suddenly diverted his thoughts to that vision of prosperity he so lately revelled in—that pleasant dream of a thriving watering-place—bright, sunny, and prosperous—the shore dotted with gaily-caparisoned donkeys, and the sea speckled with pleasure-boats. All the elements of that gay Elysium came up before him—the full tide of fortune setting strongly in, and coming to his feet. Galbraith, who revelled in millions—whose rapid calculations rarely decended to ignoble thousands—had constantly impressed upon him that if Dunn only took it up, the project was already accomplished. "He'll start you a company, my Lord, in a week; a splendid prospectus and an admirable set of names on the direction, with a paid-up capital to begin with, of—say 30,000*l*. He knows to a nicety how many Stock Exchange fellows, how many M.P.s, how many county gentlemen to have. He'll stick all the plums in the right place, too; and he'll have the shares quoted at a premium before the scrip is well out in the market. Clever fellow, my Lord—vastly clever fellow, Dunn!" And so the Earl thought too, till the letter now before him dashed that impression with disappointment.

"I'll tell you what it is, Gusty," said he, after a pause—"we must ask him down here. It is only by an actual inspection of the bay that he can form any just conception of the place. You

must write to him for me. This gouty knuckle of mine makes penwork impossible. You can say——Just find a sheet of paper, and I'll tell you what to say." Now, the noble Earl was not as ready at dictation as he had fancied, for when Lady Augusta had opened her writing-desk, arranged her writing materials, and sat, pen in hand, awaiting his suggestions, he was still pacing up and down the room, muttering to himself in broken and unconnected phrases, quite unsuited to the easy flow of composition. "I suppose, Gusty—I take it for granted—you must begin, 'My dear Sir'—eh?—or, perhaps, better still, 'Dear Mr. Dunn.'"

"'Dear Mr. Dunn,'" said she, not looking up from the paper, but quietly retouching the last letters with her pen.

"But I don't see why, after all, we should follow this foolish lead," said he, proudly. "The acceptance he meets from others need not dictate to us, Gusty. I'd say, 'The Earl of Glengariff'—or, 'I am requested by Lord Glengariff——'"

"'My father, Lord Glengariff,'" interposed she, quietly.

"It sounds more civilly, perhaps. Be it so;" and again he walked up and down, in the same hard conflict of composition. At length he burst forth: "There's nothing on earth more difficult than addressing a man of this sort. You want his intimacy without familiarity. You wish to be able to obtain the benefit of his advice, and yet not incur the infliction of his dictation. In fact, you are perfectly prepared to treat him as a valued guest, provided he never lapses into the delusion that he is your friend. Now, it would take old Metternich to write the sort of note I mean."

"If I apprehend you, your wish is to ask him down here on a visit of a few days, with the intimation that you have a matter of business to communicate——"

"Yes, yes," said he, impatiently, "that's very true. The business part of the matter should come in incidentally, and yet the tone of the invitation be such as to let him distinctly understand that he does not come without an express object. Now you have my meaning, Gusty," said he, with the triumphant air of one who had just surmounted a difficulty.

"If I have, then, I am as far as ever from knowing how to convey it," said she, half peevishly. "I'd simply say, 'Dear Sir,' or, 'Dear Mr. Dunn,—There is a question of great moment to myself, on which your advice and counsel would be most valuable to me. If you could spare me the few days a visit would cost you, and while giving us the great pleasure of your society——'"

"Too flattering by half. No, no," broke he in again. "I'll

tell you what would be the effect of all that, Gusty"—and his voice swelled out full and forcibly—"the fellow would come here, and, before a week was over, he'd call me Glengariff!"

She grew crimson over face, and forehead, and neck, and then almost as quickly pale again, and, rising hastily from the table, said: "Really, you expect too much from my subtlety as a note-writer. I think I'd better request Mr. Dunn to look out for one of those invaluable creatures they call companions, who pay your bills, correct your French notes, comb the lapdog, and scold your maid for you. *She* might be, perhaps, equal to all this nice diplomacy."

"Not a bad notion by any means, Gusty," said he, quickly. "A clever woman would be inestimable for all the correspondence we are like to have soon; far better than a man—less obtrusive—more confidential—not so open to jobbery; a great point, a very great point. Dunn's the very man, too, to find out the sort of person we want."

"Something more than governess, and less than lady," said she, half superciliously.

"The very thing, Gusty—the very thing. Why there are women with breeding enough to be maids of honour, and learning sufficient for a professor, whose expectations never rise beyond a paltry hundred a year—what am I saying?—sixty or seventy are nearer the mark. Now for it, Gusty. Make this object the substance of your letter. You can have no difficulty in describing what will suit us. We live in times, unfortunately, when people of birth and station are reduced to straitened circumstances on every hand. It reminds me of what poor Hammersley used to say: 'Do you observe,' said he, 'that whenever there's a great smash on the turf, you'll always see the coaches horsed with thorough-breds for the next year or two!'"

"A very unfeeling remark, if it mean anything at all."

"Never mind. Write this letter, and say at the foot of it, 'We should be much pleased if, in your journeys south'—he's always coming down to Cork and the neighbourhood—"you could give us a few days at Glengariff Hermitage. My father has certain communications to make to you, which he is confident would exempt your visit from the reproach of mere idleness.' He'll take that; the fellow is always flattered when you seem impressed by the immensity of his avocations!" And with a hearty chuckle at the weakness he was triumphing over, the old Lord left the room, while his daughter proceeded to compose her letter.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A MORNING AT OSTEND.

It would never have occurred to the mind of any one who saw Annesley Beecher and Davis, as they sat at breakfast together in Ostend, that such a scene as we have described could have occurred between them. Not only was their tone frank and friendly with each other, but a gay and lively spirit pervaded the conversation, and two seemingly more light-hearted fellows it were hard to find.

As the chemist is able by the minutest drop, an almost imperceptible atom of some subtle ingredient, to change the properties of some vast mass, altering colour, and odour, and taste at once, so did the great artist Grog Davis know how to deal with the complicated nature of Beecher, that he could at any moment hurl him down into the blackest depths of despair, or elevate him to the highest pinnacle of hope and enjoyment. The glorious picture of a race-course, with all its attendant rogueries, betting-stands crammed with "flats," a ring crowded with "greenhorns," was a tableau of which he never wearied. Now, this was a sort of landscape Grog touched off neatly. All the figures he introduced were life-studies, every tint, and shade, and effect taken carefully from nature. With a masterly hand, he sketched out a sort of future campaign, artfully throwing Beecher himself into the foreground, and making him fancy that he was in some sort necessary to the great events before them.

"Mumps did not touch his hock, I hope, when he kicked there?" asked Beecher.

"Call him Klepper—never forget that," remonstrated Grog: "he's remarkably like Mumps, that's all; but Mumps is in Staffordshire—one of the Pottery fellows has him."

"So he is," laughed Beecher, pleasantly. "I know the man that owns him."

"No you don't," broke in Davis; "You've only heard his name: it is Coulson, or Cotton, or something like that. One thing, however, is certain, he values him at twelve hundred pounds, and we'd sell our horse for eight."

"So we would, Grog, and be on the right side of the hedge, too."

"He'd be dog cheap for it," said Davis; "he's one of those lazy beggars that never wear out. I'd lay an even thousand on it, that he runs this day too years as he does to-day, and even when he hasn't speed for a flat race he'll be a rare steeple-chase horse."

Beecher's eyes glistened, and he rubbed his hands with delight as he heard him.

"I do like an ugly horse," resumed Davis; "a heavy-shouldered beast, with lob-ears, lazy eyes, and capped hocks, and if they know how to come out a stable with a 'knuckle over' of the pastern, or a little bit lame, they're worth their weight in gold."

What a merry laugh was Beecher's as he listened.

"Blow me!" cried Grog, in a sort of enthusiasm, "if some horses don't seem born cheats—regular legs! They drag their feet along, all weary and tired; if you push them a bit, they shut up, or they answer the whip with a kind of shrug, as if to say, 'It ain't any use punishing me at all,' the while they go plodding in, at the tail of the others, till within five, or maybe four lengths of the winning-post, and then you see them stretching—it ain't a stride, it's a stretch—you can't say how it's done, but they draw on—on—on, till you see half a head in front, and there they stay—just doing it—no more."

"Mumps is exactly——"

"Klepper—remember, he's Klepper," said Grog, mildly.

"Klepper, to be sure—how can I forget it?"

"I hope that fellow Conway is off," said Grog.

"Yes, he started by the train for Liège—third class, too—must be pretty hard up, I take it, to travel that way."

"Good enough for a fellow that's been roughing it in the ranks these two years."

"He's a gentleman, though, for all that," broke in Beecher.

"And Strawberry ran at Doncaster, and I saw him t'other day in a 'bus. Now, I'd like to know how much better he is for having once been a racer?"

"Blood always tells——"

"In a horse, Beecher, in a horse, not in a man. Haven't I got a deal of noble blood in my veins?—ain't I able to show a thorough-bred pedigree?" said he, mockingly. "Well, let me see the fellow will stand at eight paces from the muzzle of a rifle-pistol more cool, or who'll sight his man more calm than I will." There was a tinge of defiance in the way these words were said that by no means contributed to the ease of him who heard them.

"When do we go for Brussels, Grog?" asked he, anxious to change the subject.

"Here's the map of the country," said Davis, producing a card scrawled over with lines and figures. "Brussels, the 12th and 14th, Spa, the 20th, Aix, the 25th. Then *you* might take a shy at Duseldorf, *I* can't; I winged a Prussian major there five years ago, and they won't let me in. I'll meet you at Wiesbaden, and we'll have a week at the tables. You'll have to remember that I'm Captain Christopher so long as we're on the Rhine; once at Baden, 'Richard's himself again!'"

"Is this for either of you, gentlemen?" said the waiter presenting an envelope from the telegraph-office.

"Yes. I'm Captain Davis," said Grog, as he broke the seal.

"'Is the Dean able to preach?—may we have a collection? Telegraph back.—Tom,'" read Davis, slowly, aloud; and then added, "Ain't he a flat to be always telegraphing these things? As if every fellow in the office couldn't see his game."

"Spicer, is it?" asked Beecher.

"Yes; he wants to hear how the horse is—if there's good running in him, and what he's to lay on; but that's no way to ask it. I mind the day, at Wolverton, when Lord Berrydale got one of these: 'Your mother is better—they are giving her tonics.' And I whispered to George Rigby, '~~It's about~~ Butterfly his mare, that's in for the York, and that's to say, 'She's all safe, lay heavy on it.' And so I hedged round, and backed her up to eight thousand—ay, and I won my money; and when Berrydale said to me, after the race was over, 'Grog,' says he, 'you seem to have had a glimpse of the line of country this time,' says I to him, 'Yes, my Lord,' says I; 'and I'm glad to find the tonics agree with your Lordship's mother.' Didn't he redden up to the roots of his hair! and when he turned away he said, 'There's no coming up to that fellow Davis!'"

"But I wonder you let him see that you were in his secret," said Beecher.

"That was the way to treat *him*. If it was Baynton or Herries,

I'd not have said a word; but I knew Berrydale was sure to let me have a share in the first good thing going, just out of fear of me, and so he did; that was the way I came to back Old Bailey."

It was now Beecher's turn to gaze with admiring wonder at this great intelligence, and certainly his look was veneration itself.

"Here's another despatch," cried Davis, as the waiter presented another packet like the former one. "We're like Secretaries of State to-day," added he, laughing, as he tore open the envelope. This time, however, he did not read the contents aloud, but sat slowly pondering over the lines to himself.

"It's not Spicer again?" asked Beecher.

"No," was the brief reply.

"Nor that other fellow—that German with the odd name?"

"No."

"Nothing about Mumps—Klepper, I mean—nothing about him?"

"Nothing; it don't concern him at all. It's not about anything you ever heard of before," said Davis, as he threw a log of wood on the fire, and kicked it with his foot. "I'll have to go to Brussels to-night. I'll have to leave this by the four o'clock train," said he, looking at his watch. "The horse isn't fit to move for twenty-four hours, so you'll remain here; he musn't be left without one of us you know."

"Of course not. But is there anything so very urgent——"

"I suppose a man is best judge of his own affairs," said Davis, rudely.

Beecher made no reply, and a long and awkward silence ensued.

"Let him have one of the powders in a linseed mash," said Davis, at last, "and see that the bandages are left on—only a little loose—at night. Tom must remain with him in the box on the train, and I'll look out for you at the station. If we shouldn't meet, come straight to the Hôtel Tirlemont, where all will be ready for you."

"Remember, Grog, I've got no money; you haven't trusted me with a single Napoleon."

"I know that; here's a hundred francs. Look out sharp, for you'll have to account for every centime of it when we meet. Dine upstairs here, for if you go down to the ordinary you'll be talking to every man Jack you meet—ay, you know you will."

"Egad! it's rather late in the day to school me on the score of manners."

"I'm not a talking of manners, I'm speaking of discretion—of

common prudence—things you're not much troubled with; you're just as fit to go alone in life as I am to play the organ at an oratorio."

"Many thanks for the flattery," said Beecher, laughing.

"What would be the good of flattering you?" broke out Grog. "You ain't rich, that one could borrow from you; you haven't a great house, where one could get dinners out of you; you're not even the head of your family, that one might draw something out of your rank—you ain't anything."

"Except *your* friend, Grog Davis; pray don't rob me of that distinction," said Beecher, with a polished courtesy the other felt more cutting than any common sarcasm.

"It's the best leaf in your book, whatever you may think of it," said Davis, sternly; "and it will be a gloomy morning for you whenever you cease to be it."

"I don't intend it, old fellow; I'll never tear up the deed of partnership, you may rely upon that. The old-established firm of Beecher and Davis, or Davis and Beecher—for I don't care which—shall last *my* time, at least;" and he held out his hand with a cordiality that even Grog felt irresistible, for he grasped and shook it heartily.

"If I could only get you to run straight, I'd make a man of you," said Grog, eyeing him fixedly. "There's not a fellow in England could do as much for you as I could. There's nobody knows what's in you as I do, and there's nobody knows where you break down like *me*."

"True, O Grog, every word of it."

"I'd put you in the first place in the sporting world—I'd have your name at the top of the list at "the Turf." In six months from this day—this very day—I'd bind myself to make Annesley Beecher the foremost man at Newmarket. But just on one condition."

"And that?"

"You should take a solemn oath—I'd make it a solemn one, I promise you—never to question anything I decided in your behalf, but obey me to the letter in whatever I ordered. Three months of that servitude, and you'd come out what I've promised you."

"I'll swear it this moment," cried Beecher.

"Will you?" asked Davis, eagerly.

"In the most solemn and formal manner you can dictate on oath to me. I'll take it now, only premising you'll not ask me anything against the laws."

"Nothing like hanging, nor even transportation," said Grog,

laughing, while Beecher's face grew crimson, and then pale. "No—no; all I'll ask is easily done, and not within a thousand miles of a misdemeanor. But you shall just think it over quietly. I don't want a 'catch match.' You shall have time to reconsider what I have said, and when we meet at Brussels you can tell me your mind."

"Agreed; only I hold *you* to your bargain, remember, if I don't change."

"I'll stand to what I've said," said Davis. "Now, remember, the Hôtel Tirlemont; and so, good-by, for I must pack up."

When the door closed after him, Annesley Beecher walked the room, discussing with himself the meaning of Davis's late words. Well did he know that to restore himself to rank, and credit, and fair fame, was a labour of no common difficulty. How was he ever to get back to that station, forfeited by so many derelictions? Davis might, it is true, get his bills discounted—might hit upon fifty clever expedients for raising the wind—might satisfy this one, compromise with that; he might even manage so cleverly, that race-courses and betting-rooms would be once more open to him. But what did—what could Grog know of that higher world where once he had moved, and to which, by his misdeeds, he had forfeited all claim to return? Why, Davis didn't even know the names of those men whose slightest words are verdicts upon character. All England was not Ascot, and Grog only recognised a world peopled with gentlemen riders and jocks, and a landscape dotted with flagstaffs, and closed in with a standhouse.

"No, no," said he to himself; "that's a flight above you, Master Davis. It's not to be thought of."

CHAPTER XXX.

THE OPERA.

A DINGY old den enough is the Hôtel Tirlemont, with its low-arched *porte-cochère* and its narrow windows, small-paned and iron-barred. It rather resembles one of those antiquated hostels you see in the background of an Ostade or a Teniers than the smart edifice which we now-a-days look for in an hotel. Such was certainly the opinion of Annesley Beecher as he arrived there on the evening after that parting with Davis we have just spoken of. Twice did he ask the guide who accompanied him "if this was really the Tirlemont?" and "if there were not some other hotel of the same name?" and while he half hesitated whether he should enter, a waiter respectfully stepped forward to ask if he were the gentleman whose apartment had been ordered by Captain Davis; a demand to which, with a sullen assent, he yielded, and slowly mounted the stairs."

"Is the Captain at home?" asked he.

"No, Sir; he went off to the railway station to meet you. Mademoiselle, however, is up-stairs.

"Mademoiselle!" cried Beecher, stopping, and opening wide his eyes in astonishment. "This *is* something new," muttered he. "When did she come?"

"Last night, Sir, after dinner."

"Where from?"

"From a Pensionnat outside the Porte de Scharbeck, I think, Sir; at least, her maid described it as in that direction."

"And what is she called—Mademoiselle Violette, or Virginie, or Ida, or what is it, eh?" asked he jocularly.

"Mademoiselle, Sir—only Mademoiselle—the Captain's daughter!"

"His daughter!" repeated he, in increased wonderment, to himself. "Can this be possible?"

"There is no doubt of it, Sir. The lady of the Pensionnat brought her here last night in her own carriage, and I heard her, as she entered the salon, say, 'Now, Mademoiselle, that I have placed you in the hands of your father——' and then the door closed."

"I never knew he had a daughter," muttered Beecher to himself. "Which is my room?"

"We have prepared this one for you, but to-morrow you shall have a more comfortable one, with a look-out over the lower town."

"Put me somewhere where I shan't hear that confounded piano, I beg of you. Who is it rattles away that fashion?"

"Mademoiselle, Sir."

"To be sure—I ought to have guessed it: and sings too, I'll be bound?"

"Like Grisi, Sir," responded the waiter, enthusiastically, for the Tirlémont being frequented by the artistic class, had given him great opportunity for forming his taste.

Just at this moment a rich, full voice swelled forth in one of the popular airs of Verdi, but with a degree of ease and freedom that showed the singer soared very far indeed above the pretensions of mere amateurship.

"Wasn't I right, Sir," asked the waiter, triumphantly. "You'll not hear anything better at the Grand Opera."

"Send me up some hot water, and open that portmanteau," said Beecher, while he walked on towards the door of the salon. He hesitated for a second or two about then presenting himself, but as he thought of Grog Davis, and what Grog Davis's daughter must be like, he turned the handle and entered.

A lady arose from the piano as the door opened, and even in the half-darkened room Beecher could perceive that she was graceful, and with an elegance in her gesture for which he was in no wise prepared.

"Have I the honour to address Miss Davis?"

"You are Mr. Annesley Beecher, the gentleman my Papa has been expecting," said she, with an easy smile. "He has just gone off to meet you."

Nothing could be more common-place than these words, but they were uttered in a way that at once declared the breeding of the speaker. She spoke to the friend of her father, and there was a tone of one who felt that even in a first meeting a certain amount of intimacy might subsist between them.

"It's very strange," said Beecher, "but your father and I have been friends this many a year—close friends, too—and I never as much as suspected he had a daughter. What a shame of him not to have given me the pleasure of knowing you before."

"It was a pleasure he was chary enough of to himself," said she, laughing. "I have been at school nearly four years, and have only seen him once, and then for a few hours."

"Yes—but really," stammered out Beecher. "fascinations—charms such as——"

"Pray Sir, don't distress yourself about turning a compliment. I'm quite sure I'm very attractive, but I don't in the least want to be told so. You see," she added, after a pause, "I'm presuming upon what Papa has told me of your old friendship to be very frank with you."

"I am enchanted at it," cried Beecher. "Egad! if you 'cut out all the work,' though, I'll scarcely be able to follow you."

"Ah! so here you are before me," cried Davis, entering, and shaking his hand cordially. "You had just driven off when I reached the station. All right, I hope?"

"All right, thank you."

"You've made Lizzy's acquaintance, I see, so I needn't introduce you. *She* knows you this many a day."

"But why have *I* not had the happiness of knowing *her*?" asked Beecher.

"How's Klepper," asked Grog, abruptly. "The swelling gone out of the hocks yet?"

"Yes; he's clean as a whistle."

"The wind-gall, too—has that gone?"

"Going rapidly; a few days' walking exercise will make him perfect."

"No news of Spicer and his German friend—though I expected to have had a telegraph all day yesterday. But come, these are not interesting matters for Lizzy—we'll have up dinner, and see about a box for the Opera."

"A very gallant thought, Papa, which I accept with pleasure."

"I must dress, I suppose," said Beecher, half asking, for even yet he could not satisfy his mind what amount of observance was due to the daughter of Grog Davies.

"I conclude you must," said she, smiling; and I, too, must make a suitable toilette;" and, with a slight bow and a little smile, she swept past them out of the room.

"How close you have been, old fellow—close as wax—about

this," said Beecher; "and, hang me, if she mightn't be daughter to the proudest Duke in England!"

"So she might," said Grog; "and it was to make her so, I have consented to this life of separation. What respect and deference would the fellows shew *my* daughter when *I* wasn't by? How much delicacy would she meet with when the fear of on ounce ball wasn't over them? And was I going to bring her up in such a set as you and I live with? Was a young creature like that to begin the world without seeing one man that wasn't a 'leg,' or one woman that wasn't worse? Was it by lessons of robbery and cheating her mind was to be stored? And was she to start in life by thinking that a hell was high society? Look at her *now*," said he, sternly, "and say if I was in Norfolk Island to-morrow, where's the fellow would have the pluck to insult her? It is true *she* doesn't know me as you and the others know me; but the man that would let her into *that* secret would never tell her another." There was a terrible fierceness in his eye as he spoke, and the words came from him with a hissing sound, like the venomous threatenings of a serpent. "*She* knows nothing of *my* life nor *my* ways. Except your own name, she never heard me mention one of the fellows we live with. She knows *you* to be the brother of Lord Viscount Lackington, and that you are the Honourable Annesley Beecher, that's all she knows of *you*; ain't that little enough?"

Beecher tried to laugh easily at this speech, but it was only a very poor and faint attempt after all.

"She thinks *me* a man of fortune, and *you* an unblemished gentleman, and if that be not innocence, I'd like to know what is! Of where, how, and with whom we pick up our living, she knows as much as *we* do about the Bench of Bishops."

"I must confess I don't think the knowledge would improve her!" said Beecher, with a laugh.

A fierce and savage glance from Davis, however, very quickly arrested this jocularly, and Beecher, in a graver tone, resumed: "It was a deuced fine thing of you, Grog, to do this. There's not another fellow living would have had the head to think of it. But now that she has come home to you, how do you mean to carry on the campaign? A girl like that can't live secluded from the world—she must go out into society? Have you thought of that?"

"I have thought of it," rejoined Davis, bluntly, but in a tone that by no means invited further inquiry.

"Her style and her manner fit her for the best set anywhere——"

"That's where I intend her to be," broke in Davis.

"I need scarcely tell as clever a fellow as you," said Beecher, mildly, "that there's nothing so difficult as to find footing among these people. Great wealth may obtain it, or great patronage. There are women in London who can do that sort of thing; there are just two or three such, and you may imagine how difficult it is to secure their favour."

"They're all cracked teacups those women you speak of; one has only to know where the flaw is, and see how easily managed they are!"

Beecher smiled at this remark; he chuckled to himself, too, to see that for once the wily Grog Davis had gone out of his depth, and ventured to discuss people and habits of which he knew nothing; but unwilling to prolong a controversy so delicate, he hurried away to his room to dress. Davis, too, retired on a similar errand, and a student of life might have been amused to have taken a peep into the two dressing-rooms. As for Beecher, it was but the work of a few minutes to array himself in dinner costume. It was a routine task that he performed without a thought on its details. All was ready at his hand, and even to the immaculate tie, which seemed the work of patience and skill, he despatched the whole performance in less than a quarter of an hour. Not so Davis; he ransacked drawers and portmanteaus—covered the bed, the chairs, and the table with garments—tried on and took off again—endeavoured to make colours harmonise—or hit upon happy contrasts. He was bent on appearing a "swell," and unquestionably when he did issue forth, with a canary-coloured vest, and a green coat with gilt buttons, his breast a galaxy of studs and festooned chains, it would have been unfair to say he had not succeeded.

Beecher had but time to compliment him on his "get up," when Miss Davis entered. Though her dress was simply the quiet costume of a young unmarried girl, there was in her carriage and bearing, as she came in, all the graceful ease of the best society, and lighted up by the lamps of the apartment, Beecher saw to his astonishment the most beautiful girl he had ever beheld. It was not alone the faultless delicacy of her face, but there was that mingled gentleness and pride, that strange blending of softness and seriousness, which sit so well on the high-born, giving a significance to every gesture or word of those whose every movement is so measured, and every syllable so care-

fully uttered. "Why wasn't she a Countess in her own right?" thought he; "that girl might have all London at her feet."

The dinner went on very pleasantly. Davis, too much occupied in listening to his daughter, or watching the astonishment of Beecher, scarcely ever spoke, but the others chatted away about whatever came uppermost in a light and careless tone that delighted him.

Beecher was not sorry at the opportunity of a little display. He was glad to show Davis that in the great world of society he could play no insignificant part, and so he put forth all his little talents as a talker, with choice anecdotes of "smart people," and the sayings and doings of a set which, to Grog, were as much myths as the inscriptions on an Assyrian monument. Lizzy Davis evidently took interest in his account of London and its life. She liked, too, to hear about the families of her school-fellows, some of whom bore "cognate" names, and she listened with actual eagerness to descriptions of the gorgeous splendour and display of a town "season."

"And I am to see all these fine things, and know all these fine people, Papa?" asked she.

"Yes, I suppose so—one of these days, at least," muttered Grog, not caring to meet Beecher's eye.

"I don't think you care for this kind of life so much as Mr. Beecher, Pa. Is their frivolity too great for your philosophy?"

"It ain't that!" muttered Grog, growing confused.

"Then do tell me, now, something of the sort of people you are fond of; the chances are that I shall like them just as well as the others."

Beecher and Davis exchanged glances of most intense significance, and were it not from downright fear Beecher would have burst out laughing.

"Then I will ask Mr. Beecher," said she, gaily. "You'll not be so churlish as Papa, I'm certain. You'll tell me what his world is like?"

"Well, it's a very smart world, too," said Beecher, slyly enjoying the malicious moment of worrying Grog with impunity. "Not so many pretty women in it, perhaps, but plenty of movement, plenty of fun, eh! Davis! Are you fond of horses, Miss Davis?"

"Passionately, and I flatter myself I can ride, too. By the way, is it true, Papa, you have brought a horse from England for me?"

"Who could have told you that," said Davis, almost sternly.

"My maid heard it from a groom that has just arrived, but with such secrecy that I suppose I have destroyed all the pleasure of the surprise you intended me; never mind, dearest Pa, I am just as grateful——"

"Grateful for nothing," broke in Davis. "The groom is a prating rascal, and your maid ought to mind her own affairs." Then reddening to his temples with shame at his ill-temper, he added, "There is a horse, to be sure, but he ain't much of a lady's palfrey."

"What would you say to her riding Klepper in the Allée Verte—it might be a rare stroke?" asked Beecher, in a whisper to Davis.

"Do you think that *she* is to be brought into *our* knaveries? Is *that* all you have learned from what I've been saying to you?" whispered Davis, with a look of such savage ferocity that Beecher grew sick at heart with terror.

"I'm sorry to break in upon such confidential converse," said *she*, laughingly, "but pray remember we are losing the first scene of the opera."

"I'm at your orders," said Beecher, as with his accustomed easy gallantry he stepped forward to offer her his arm.

The opera was a favourite one, and the house was crowded in every part. As in all cities of a certain rank, the occupants of the boxes, with a few rare exceptions, were the same well-known people who night after night follow along the worn track of pleasure. To them the stage is but a secondary object, to which attention only wanders at intervals. The house itself, the brilliant blaze of beauty, the splendour of diamonds, the display of dress, and, more than all these, the subtle by-play of intrigue, detectable only by eyes deep-skilled and trained—these form the main attractions of a scene wherein our modern civilisation is more strikingly exhibited than in any other situation.

Scarcely had Lizzy Davis taken her seat than a low murmur of wondering admiration ran through the whole house, and, in the freedom which our present-day habits license, every opera glass was turned towards her. Totally unconscious of the admiration she was exciting, her glances ranged freely over the theatre in every part, and her eyes were directed from object to object in amazement at the gorgeousness of the scene around her. Seated far back in the box, entirely screened from view, her father, too, perceived nothing of that strange manifestation, wherein a sort of homage is blended with a degree of impertinence, but watched the stage with intense eagerness. Very different from the feel-

ings of either father or daughter were the feelings of Annesley Beecher. He knew well the Opera and its habits, and as thoroughly saw that it is to the world of fashion what Tattersall's or the Turf is to the world of sport—the great ring where every match is booked, every engagement registered, and every new aspirant for success canvassed and discussed. There was not a glance turned towards the unconscious girl at his side but he could read its secret import. How often had it been his own lot to stare up from his stall at some fair face, unknown to that little world which arrogates to itself all knowledge, and mingle his criticism with all the impertinences fashion loves to indulge in. The steady stare of some, the unwilling admiration of others, the ironical gaze of more, were all easy of interpretation by him, and for the very first time in his life he became aware of the fact that it was possible to be unjust with regard to the unknown.

As the piece proceeded and her interest in the play increased, a slightly heightened colour, and an expression of half eagerness, gave her beauty all that it had wanted before of animation, and there was now an expression of such captivation on her face, that, carried away by that mysterious sentiment which sways masses, sending its secret spell from heart to heart, the whole audience turned from the scene to watch its varying effects upon that beautiful countenance. The opera was *Rigoletto*, and she continued to translate to her father the touching story of that sad old man, who, lost to every sentiment of honour, still cherished in his heart of hearts his daughter's love. The terrible contrast between his mockery of the world and his affection for his home, the bitter consciousness of how he treated others, conjuring up the terrors of what yet might be his own fate, came to him in her words, as the stage revealed their action, and gradually he leaned over in his eagerness till his head projected outside the box.

"There—wasn't I right about her?" said a voice from one of the stalls beneath. "That's Grog Davis. I know the fellow well."

"I've won my wager," said another. "There's old Grog leaning over her shoulder, and there can't be much doubt about her now."

"Annesley Beecher at one side, and Grog Davis at the other," said a third, "make the case very easy reading. I'll go round and get presented to her."

"Let us leave this, Davis," whispered Beecher, while he

trembled from head to foot—"let us leave this at once. Come down to the crush-room, and I'll find a carriage."

"Why so—what do you mean?" said Davis, and as suddenly he followed Beecher's glance towards the pit, whence every eye was turned towards them.

That glance was not to be mistaken. It was the steady and insolent stare the world bestows upon those who have neither champions nor defenders; and Davis returned the gaze with a defiance as insulting.

"For any sake, Davis, let us get away," whispered Beecher again. "Only think of *her*, if there should be any exposure!"

"Exposure!—how should there? Who'd dare——"

Before he could finish, the curtain at the back of the box was rudely drawn aside, and a tall, handsome man, with a certain swaggering ease of manner that seemed to assert his right to be there if he pleased, came forward, saying:

"How goes it, Davis? I just caught a glimpse of that charming——"

"A word with you, Captain Hamilton," said Davis, between his teeth, as he pushed the other towards the door.

"As many as you like, old fellow, by-and-by. For the present, I mean to establish myself here."

"That you shan't, by Heaven!" cried Davis, as he placed himself in front of him. "Leave this, Sir, at once."

"Why the fellow is deranged," said Hamilton, laughing; "or is it jealousy, old boy?"

With a violent push Davis drove him backwards, and ere he could recover, following up the impulse, he thrust him outside the box, hurriedly passing outside, and shutting the door after him.

So rapidly and so secretly had all this occurred, that Lizzy saw nothing of it, all her attention being eagerly fixed on the stage. Not so Beecher. He had marked it all, and now sat listening in terror to the words of high altercation in the lobby. From sounds that boded like insult and outrage, the noise gradually decreased to more measured tones; then came a few words in whisper, and Davis, softly drawing the curtain, stepped gently to his chair at his daughter's back. A hasty sign to Beecher gave him to understand that all was settled quietly, and the incident was over.

"You'll not think me very churlish if I rob you of one act of the opera, Lizzy?" said Davis, as the curtain fell; "but I have a racking headache, which all this light and heat are only increasing."

"Let us go at once, dearest papa," said she, rising. "You should have told me of this before. There, Mr. Beecher, you needn't leave this——"

"She's quite right," said Davis; "you must remain." And the words were uttered with a certain significance that Beecher well understood as a command.

It was past midnight when Annesley Beecher returned to the hotel, and both Davis and his daughter had already gone to their rooms.

"Did your master leave any message for me?" said he to the groom who acted as Davis's valet.

"No, Sir, not a word."

"Do you know, would he see me? Could you ask him?" said he.

The man disappeared for a few minutes, and then coming back, said, "Mr. Davis is fast asleep, Sir, and I dare not disturb him."

"Of course not," said Beecher, and turned away.

"How that fellow can go to bed and sleep, after such a business as that!" muttered Beecher, as he drew his chair towards the fire, and sat ruminating over the late incident. It was in a spirit of triumphant satisfaction that he called to mind the one solitary point in which he was the superior of Davis—class and condition—and he revelled in the thought that men like Grog make nothing but blunders when they attempt the habits of those above them. "With all his shrewdness," said he to himself, half aloud, "he could not perceive that he has been trying an impossibility. She is beyond them all in beauty, her manners are perfect, her breeding unexceptionable; and yet, there she is, Grog Davis's daughter! Ay, Grog, my boy, you'll see it one of these days. It's all to no use. Enter her for what stakes you like, she'll be always disqualified. There's only one thing carries these attempts through—if you could give her a pot of money. Yes, Master Davis, there are fellows—and with good blood in their veins—that, for fifty or sixty thousand pounds, would marry even *your* daughter." With this last remark he finished all his reflections, and proceeded to prepare for bed.

Sleep, however, would not come; he was restless and uneasy; the incident in the theatre might get abroad, and his own name be mentioned; or it might be that Hamilton, knowing well who and what Davis was, would look to him, Beecher, for satisfaction. *There* was another pleasant eventuality—to be drawn into a quarrel and shot for Grog Davis's daughter! To be the travelling

companion of such a man was bad enough—to risk being seen with him on railroads and steam-boats was surely sufficient—but to be paraded in places of public amusement, to be dragged before the well-dressed world, not as his chance associate, but as a member of his domestic circle, chaperoning his daughter to the Opera, was downright intolerable! And thus was it that this man, who had been dunned and insulted by creditors, hunted from place to place by sheriff's officers, browbeaten by bankruptcy practitioners, stigmatised by the press, haunted all the while by a conscience that whispered there was even worse hanging over him, yet did he feel more real terror from the thought of how he would be regarded by his own "order" for this unseemly intimacy, than shame for all his deeper and graver transgressions.

"No," said he, at last, springing from his bed, and lighting his candle, "I'll be off. I'll cut my lucky, Master Grog; and here goes to write you half a dozen lines to break the fact to you. I'll call it a sudden thought—a notion—that I ought to see Lackington at once. I'll say that I couldn't think of subjecting Miss Davis to the inconvenience of that rapid mode of travelling I feel to be so imminently necessary. I'll tell him that as I left the theatre, I saw one of Fordyce's clerks, that the fellow knew me and grinned, and that I know I shall be arrested if I stay here. I'll hint that Hamilton, who is highly connected, will have the English Legation at us all. Confound it, he'll believe none of these. I'll just say——" Here he took his pen and wrote:

"DEAR D.,—After we parted last night, a sudden caprice seized me that I'd start off at once for Italy. Had you been alone, old fellow, I should never have thought of it; but seeing that I left you in such charming company, with one—with one whose——['No, that won't do—I must strike out that;'] and so he murmured over the lines ending in 'company,' and then went on—I have no misgivings about being either missed or wanted. —['Better, perhaps, missed or regretted.'] We have been too long friends to——['No, we are too old pals, that's better—he doesn't care much for friendship']—too old pals to make me suspect you will be displeased with this—this unforeseen——['That's a capital word!—unforeseen what? It's always calamity comes after unforeseen; but I can't call it calamity']—unforeseen 'bolt over the ropes,' and believe me as ever, or believe me 'close as wax,'

"Yours, A. B."

"A regular diplomatic touch, I call that note," said he, as he reread it to himself with much complacency. "Lackington thinks me a 'flat;' then let any one read that, and say if the fellow that wrote it is a fool." And now he sealed and directed his epistle, having very nearly addressed it to Grog, instead of to Captain, Davis. "His temper won't be angelic when he gets it," muttered he, "but I'll be close to Liège by that time." And with this very reassuring reflection he jumped into bed again, determining to remain awake till daybreak.

Wearied out at last with watching, Annesley Beecher fell off asleep, and so soundly, too, that it was not till twice spoken to, he could arouse and awaken.

"Eh, what is it, Rivers?" cried he, as he saw the trim training-groom at his side. "Anything wrong with the horse?"

"No, Sir, nothing; *he's* all right, anyhow."

"What is it, then; any one from town looking for us?"

"No, Sir, nobody whatever. It's the Captain himself——"

"What of him? is he ill?"

"Sound as a roach, Sir; he's many a mile off by this. Says he to me, 'Rivers,' says he, 'when you gets back to the Tirlmont, give this note to Mr. Beecher; he'll tell you afterwards what's to be done. Only,' says he, 'don't forget to rub a little of the white oils on that near hock; very weak,' says he, 'be sure it's very weak, so as not to blister him.' Ain't he a wonderful man, Sir, to be thinking o' that at such a moment?"

"Draw the curtain there—let me have more light," cried Beecher, eagerly, as he opened the small and crumpled piece of paper. The contents were in pencil, and very brief:

"I'm off through the Ardennes towards Treves; come up to Aix with my daughter, and wait there till you hear from me. There's a vacant 'troop' in the Horse Guards Blue this morning. Rivers can tell you all.—Yours, C. D."

"What has happened, Rivers?" cried he in intense anxiety. "Tell me at once."

"Sir, it don't take long to tell. It didn't take very long to do. It was three, or maybe half-past, this morning, the Captain comes to my room, and says, 'Rivers, get up; be lively,' says he; 'dress yourself, and go over to Jonesse, that fellow as has the shooting-gallery, give him this note, he'll just read it, and answer it at once; then run over to Burton's and order a coupé, with two smart horses, to be here at five; after that come back

quickly, for I want a few things packed up.' He made a sign to me that all was to be 'dark,' and so away I went, and before three-quarters of an hour was back here again. At five to the minute the carriage came to the corner of the Park, and we stepped out quietly, and when we reached it, there was Jonesse inside, with a tidy little box on his knee. 'Oh, is that it?' said I, for I knowed what that box meant—'is that it?'

"'Yes,' says the Captain, 'that's it; get up and make him drive briskly to Boitsfort.' We were a bit late, I think, for the others was there when we got up, and I heard them grumbling something about being behind time. 'Egad,' says the Captain, 'you'll find we've come early enough before we've done with you.' They were cruel words, Sir, now that I think how he tumbled him over stone dead in a moment."

"Who dead?"

"That fine, handsome young man, with the light-brown beard—Hamilton, they said his name was—and a nicer fellow you couldn't wish to see. I'll never forget him as he lay there stretched on the grass, and the small blue hole in his forehead—you'd not believe it was ever half the size of a bullet—and his glove in his left hand, all so natural as if he was alive. I believe I'd have been standing there yet, looking at him, when the Captain called me, and said, 'Rivers, take these stirrups up a hole'—for he had a saddle-horse all ready for him—'and give this note to Mr. Beecher; he'll give you his orders about Klepper,' says he, 'but mind you look to that hock.'"

"And Captain Hamilton was killed?" muttered Beecher, while he trembled from head to foot at the terrible tidings.

"Killed—dead—he never moved a finger after he fell!"

"What did his friend do? Did he say anything?—did he speak?"

"He dropped down on his knees beside him, and caught him by the hand, and cried out, 'George, my own dear fellow—George, speak to me;' but George never spoke another word."

"And Davis—Captain Davis, what did he do?"

"He shook hands with Jonesse, and said something in French that made him laugh, and then going over to where the body lay, he said, 'Colonel Humphrey,' says he, 'you're a witness that all was fair and honourable, and that if this unhappy affair ever comes to be——' and then the Colonel moved his hand for him to be off, and not speak to him. And so the Captain took his advice, and got into the saddle; but I heard him mutter some-

thing about 'teaching the Colonel better manners' next time they met."

"And then he rode away?"

"Yes; he turned into the wood, at a walking pace, for he was lighting his cigar. I saw no more of him, after that, for they called me to help them with the body, and it was all we could do, four of us, to carry him to the road where the carriage was standing."

"Did you ever hear them mention my name amongst them?" asked Beecher, tremblingly.

"No, Sir; nobody spoke of you but my master, when he handed me the note."

"What a sad business it has all been!" exclaimed Beecher, half aloud.

"I suppose it would go hard with the Captain, Sir, if he was caught?" said Rivers, inquiringly.

Again Beecher read over the note, pondering every word as he went. "What a sad business!" murmured he, "and all for nothing, or next to nothing!" Then, as if suddenly rousing himself to action, he said, "Rivers, we must get away at once. Take this passport to the police, and then look after a horse-box for the next train to Liège. We shall start at two o'clock."

"That's just what the Captain said, Sir. 'Don't delay in Brussels,' says he; 'and don't you go a talking about this morning's work. If they have you up for examination—mind that you saw nothing—you heard nothing—you know nothing.'"

"Send Miss Davis's maid here," said Beecher; "and then see about those things I've mentioned to you."

Mademoiselle Annette was a French Swiss, who very soon apprehended that a "difficulty" had occurred somewhere, which was to be kept secret from her young mistress, and though she smiled with a peculiar significance at the notion of Miss Davis travelling under Beecher's protection, she did so with all the decorum of her gifted class.

"You'll explain everything, Annette," said Beecher, who in his confusion, was eager to throw any amount of burden or responsibility upon another; "you'll tell her whatever you like as to the cause of his going away, and I'll swear to it."

"Monsieur need not give himself any trouble," was the ready answer; "all shall be cared for."

CHAPTER XXXI.

EXPLANATIONS.

WHAT a sad pity it is that the great faculty of "making things comfortable," that gifted power which blends the announcement with the explanation of misfortune, should be almost limited to that narrow guild in life to which Mademoiselle Annette belonged. The happy knack of half-informing and all-mystifying would be invaluable on the Treasury benches, and great proficients as some of our public men are in this walk, how immeasurably do they fall short of the dexterity of the "soubrette."

So neatly and so cleverly had Annette performed her task, that when Miss Davis met Beecher at breakfast, she felt that a species of reserve was necessary as to the reasons of her father's flight, that as he had not directly communicated with herself, her duty was simply to accept of the guidance he had dictated to her. Besides this, let it be owned, she had not yet rallied from the overwhelming astonishment of her first meeting with her father, so utterly was he unlike all that her imagination had pictured him! Nothing could be more affectionate, nothing kinder, than his reception; a thoughtful anxiety for her comfort pervaded all he said. The gloomy old Tirlemont even caught up an air of home as she passed the threshold, but still he was neither in look, manner, nor appearance, what she fancied. All his self-restraint could not gloss over his vulgarity, nor all his reserve conceal his defects in breeding. His short, dictatorial manner with the servants—his ever present readiness to confront nobody saw what peril—a suspectful insistence upon this or that mark of deference as a right of which he might possibly be defrauded,—all gave to his bearing a tone of insolent defiance that at once terrified and repelled her.

To all her eager questionings as to their future life, where and how it was to be passed, he would only answer vaguely or evasively. He met her inquiries about the families and friends of her schoolfellows in the same way. Of her pleasures and pursuits, her love of music, and her skill in drawing, he could not even speak with those conventionalities that disguise ignorance or indifference. Of the great world—the “Swells” he would have called them—he only knew such as were on the turf. Of the Opera, he might possibly tell the price of a stall, but not the name of a singer; and as to his own future, what or where it should be, Grog no more knew than who would be first favourite for the Leger a century hence. To “fence off” any attempt “to pump him” in the Ring, to dodge a clever cross-examiner in a court of justice, Davis would have proved himself second to none—these were games of skill, which he could play with the best—but it was a very different task to thread his way through the geography of a land he had not so much as heard of, and be asked to act as guide through regions whose very names were new to him.

The utmost that Lizzy could glean from that long first evening’s talk was, that her father had few or no political ambitions—rather shunned the great world—cared little for Dukes or Duchesses—nor set any great store on mere intellectual successes. “Perhaps,” thought she, “he has tried and found the hollowness of them all—perhaps he is weary of public life—perhaps he’d like the quiet pleasures of a country house, and that calm existence described as the *château* life of England. Would that he were only more frank with me, and let us know each other better!”

We entreat our readers to forgive us this digression, necessary as it is to show that Lizzy, whatever her real doubts and anxieties, felt bound not to display them, but accept Beecher’s counsel as her father’s will.

“And so we start for Aix-la-Chapelle by two?” said she, calmly.

“Yes; and I represent Papa,” said Beecher. “I hope you feel impressed with a due reverence for my authority.”

“Much will depend upon the way you exercise it,” said she; “I could very easily be a rebel if I suspected the justice of the Crown.”

“Come, come,” said he, laughing, “don’t threaten me! my viceroyship will be very short-lived—he’ll perhaps be at Aix before us.”

“And I suppose all my dreams of extravagance here are

defeated," said she. "Annette and I have been plotting and planning such rare devices in 'toilette,' not exactly aware where or upon whom the captivations were to be exercised. I actually revelled in the thought of all the smart fineries my Pensionnat life has denied me hitherto."

There was that blending of levity with seriousness in her tone that totally puzzled Beecher; and so was it through all she said, there ran the same half-mocking vein that left him quite unable even to fathom her meaning. He muttered out something about "dress" and "smart things" being to be found everywhere, and that most probably they should visit even more pretentious cities than Brussels ere long.

"Which means that you know perfectly well where we are going, but won't tell it. Well, I resign myself to my interesting part of 'Captive Princess' all the more submissively, since every place is new to me, every town an object of interest, every village a surprise."

"You'd like to see the world—the real, the great world, I mean?" asked Beecher.

"Oh, how much!" cried she, clasping her hands in eagerness, as she arose.

Beecher watched her as she walked up and down the room, every movement of her graceful figure displaying dignity and pride, her small and beautifully shaped head slightly thrown back, while, as her hand held the folds of her dress, her march had something almost stage-like in its sweeping haughtiness. "And how she would become it!" muttered he, below his breath, but yet leaving the murmured sounds half audible.

"What are you saying, Sir? Any disparaging sentiment on school-girl conceit or curiosity?"

"Something very like the opposite," said Beecher. "I was whispering to myself that Grantley House and Rocksley Castle were the proper sphere for *you*."

"Are these very splendid?" asked she, calmly.

"The best houses in England. Of their owners, one is a Duke, with two hundred thousand a year, the other, an Earl, with nearly as much."

"And what do they do with it?"

"Everything; all that money can have—and what is there it cannot?—is there. Gorgeous houses, horses, dress, dinners, pictures, plate, the best people to visit them, the best cook, the best deer-park, the fastest yacht at Cowes, the best hunting-stable at Melton."

"I should like that; it sounds very fascinating, all of it. How it submerges at once, too, all the petty cares and contrivances, perpetually asking, 'Can we do this?' 'Dare we do that?' It makes existence the grand, bold, free thing one dreams it ought to be."

"You're right there; it does make life very jolly."

"Are *you* very rich?" asked she, abruptly.

"No, by Jove! poor as a church mouse," said he, laughing at the strangeness of the question, whose sincere simplicity excluded all notion of impertinence. "I'm what they call a younger son, which means one who arrives in the world when the feast is over. I have a brother with a very tidy fortune, if that were of any use to me."

"And is it not the same? You share your goods together, I suppose?"

"I should be charmed to share mine with him, on terms of reciprocity," said Beecher; "but I'm afraid he'd not like it."

"So that he is rich, and you poor?"

"Exactly so."

"And this is called brotherhood? I own I don't understand it."

"Well, it has often puzzled me, too," said Beecher, laughingly; "but I believe, if I had been born first, I should have had no difficulty in it whatever."

"And Papa?" asked she, suddenly—"what was he—an elder or a younger son?"

It was all that Beecher could do to maintain a decent gravity at this question. To be asked about Grog Davis's parentage seemed about the drollest of all possible subjects of inquiry, but, with an immense effort of self-restraint, he said,

"I never exactly knew; I rather suspect, however, he was an only child."

"Then there is no title in our family?" said she, inquiringly.

"I believe not; but you are aware that this is very largely the case in England. We are not all 'Marquises,' and 'Counts,' and 'Chevaliers,' like foreigners."

"I like a title; I like its distinctiveness: the sense of carrying out a destiny, transmitting certain traits of race and kindred, seems a fine and ennobling thing; and this one has not, one cannot have, who has no past. So that," said she, after a pause, "Papa is only what you would call a 'gentleman.'"

"Gentleman is a very proud designation, believe me," said he, evading an answer.

"And how would they address me in England—am I 'my Lady?'"

"No, you are Miss Davis."

"How meanly it sounds—it might be a governess—a maid."

"When you are married, you take the rank and title of your husband—a Duchess, if he be a Duke."

"A Duchess be it, then," said she, in that light, volatile tone she was ever best pleased to employ, while, with a rattling gaiety, she went on: "How I should love to be one of those great people you have described to me—soaring away in all that ideal splendour which would come of a life of boundless cost, the actual and the present being only suggestive of a thousand fancied enjoyments! What glorious visions might one conjure up out of the sportiveness of an untrammelled will! Yes, Mr. Beecher, I have made up my mind—I'll be a Duchess!"

"But you might have all these as a Marchioness, a Countess——"

"No, I'll be a Duchess; you shan't cheat me out of my just claims."

"Will your Grace please to give orders about packing up, for we must be away soon after one o'clock," said he, laughing.

"If I were not humility itself, I'd say, the train should await my convenience," said she, as she left the room with a proud and graceful dignity that would have become a queen.

For a few moments Beecher sat silent and thoughtful in his chair, and then burst out into a fit of immoderate laughing—he laughed till his eyes ran over and his sides ached. "If this ain't going the pace, I'd like to know what speed is!" cried he, aloud. "I wonder what old Grog would say if he heard her; and the best of the joke is, she is serious all the while. She is in the most perfect good faith about it all. And this comes of the absurdity of educating her out of her class. What a strange blunder for so clever a head to make! You might have guessed, Master Grog, that she never could be a 'Plater.' Let her only enter for a grand match, and she'll be 'scratched' from one end of England to the other. Ay, Davis, my boy, you fancy pedigrees are only cared for on the turf; but there is a Racing Calendar, edited by a certain Debrett, that you never heard of."

Again, he thought of Davis as a Peer—"Viscount Davis;" Baron Grog, as he muttered it, came across him, and he burst out once more into laughter; then suddenly checking himself, he said, "I must take right good care, though, that he never hears of this same conversation; he's just the fellow to say I

led her on to laugh at and ridicule him; he'd suspect in a moment that I took her that pleasant gallop—and if he did——” A long, wailing whistle finished the sentence for him.

Other and not very agreeable reflections succeeded these. It was this very morning that he himself had determined on “levanting,” and there he was, more securely moored than ever. He looked at his watch, and muttered, “Eleven o'clock: by this time I should have been at Verviers, and on the Rhine before midnight. In four days more, I'd have had the Alps between us, and now here I am without the chance of escape; for if I bolted and left his daughter here, he'd follow me through the world to shoot me!”

He sat silent for some minutes, and then, suddenly springing up from his chair he cried out,

“Precious hard luck it is! but I can neither get on *with* this fellow nor *without* him;” and with this “summing up” he went off to his room to finish his preparations for the road.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE COUPÉ ON THE RAIL.

ANNESLEY BEECHER felt it "deuced odd" to be the travelling companion and protector of a very beautiful girl of nineteen, to whose fresh youth every common object of the road was a thing of wonderment and curiosity: the country—the people—the scores of passengers arriving or departing—the chance incidents of the way—all amused her. She possessed that power of deriving intense enjoyment from the mere aspect of life that characterises certain minds, and while thus each little incident interested her, her gay and lively sallies animated one who without her companionship had smoked his cigar in half-sulky isolation, voting journey and fellow-travellers "most monstrous bores." As they traversed that picturesque tract between Chaude Fontaine and Verviers, her delight and enjoyment increased. Those wonderful little landscapes which open at the exit from each tunnel, and where to the darkness and the gloom succeed, as if by magic, those rapid glances at swelling lawns, deep-bosomed woods, and winding rivers, with peaceful homesteads dotting the banks, were so many surprises full of marvellous beauty.

"Ah! Mr. Beecher," said she, as they emerged upon one of these charming spots, "I'm half relenting about my decision in regard to greatness. I think that in those lovely valleys yonder, where the tall willows are hanging over the river, there might possibly be an existence I should like better than the life of even a Duchess."

"It's a much easier ambition to gratify," said he smiling.

"It was not of *that* I was thinking," said she, haughtily; "nor am I so certain you are right there. I take it people can generally be that they have set their heart on being."

"I should like to be convinced of your theory," cried he, "for I have been I can't say how many years wishing for fifty things I have never succeeded in attaining."

"What else have you done besides wishing?" asked she, abruptly.

"Well, that is a hard question," said he, in some confusion; "and after all, I don't see what remained to me to do but wish."

"If that were all, it is pretty clear you had no right to succeed. When I said that people can have what they set their heart on, I meant what they so longed for that no toil was too great, no sacrifice too painful to deter them; that with eyes upturned to the summit they could breast the mountain, not minding weariness, and even when, footsore and exhausted, they sank down, they arose to the same enterprise, unshaken in courage, unbroken in faith. Have *you* known this?"

"I can scarcely say I have; but as to the longing and pining after a good turn of fortune I'll back myself against any one going."

"That's the old story of the child crying for the moon," said she, laughing. "Now, what was it you longed for so ardently?"

"Can't you guess?"

"You wanted to marry some one who would not have you, or who was beneath you, or too poor, or too something-or-other for your grand relations?"

"No, not that."

"You aspired to some great distinction as a politician, or a soldier, or perhaps a sailor?"

"No, by Jove! never dreamed of it," burst he in, laughing at the very idea.

"You sighed for some advancement in rank, or perhaps it was great wealth?"

"There you have it! . Plenty of money—lots of ready—with that all the rest comes easy."

"It must be very delightful, no doubt, to indulge every passing caprice, without ever counting the cost; but, after awhile, what a spoilt-child weariness would come over one from all this cloying enjoyment—how tiresome would it be to shorten the journey between will and accomplishment, and make of life a mere succession of 'tableaux.' I'd rather strive, and struggle, and win."

"Ay, but one doesn't always win," broke he in.

"I believe one does—if one deserves it; and even when one does not, the battle is a fine thing. How much sympathy, I ask

you, have we for those classic heroes who are always helped out of their difficulties by some friendly deity? What do we feel for him who, in the thick of the fight, is sure to be rescued by a goddess in a cloud?"

"I confess I do like a good 'book,' 'hedged' well all round, and standing to win somewhere. I mean," added he, in an explanatory tone, "I like to be safe in this world."

"Stand on the bank of the stream, then, and let bolder hearts push across the river!"

"Well, but I'm rather out of patience," said he, in a tone of half irritation. "I've had many a venture in life, and too many of them unfortunate ones."

"How I do wonder," said she, after a pause, "that you and Papa are such great friends, for I have rarely heard of two people who take such widely different notions of life. *You* seem to me all caution and reserve—*he*, all daring and energy."

"That's the reason, perhaps, we suit each other so well," said Beecher, laughing.

"It may be so," said she thoughtfully; and now there was silence between them.

"Have you got sisters, Mr. Beecher?" said she, at length.

"No; except I may call my brother's wife one."

"Tell me of her. Is she young—is she handsome?"

"She is not young, but she is still a very handsome woman."

"Dark or fair?"

"Very dark, almost Spanish in complexion—a great deal of haughtiness in her look, but great courtesy when she pleases."

"Would she like *me*?"

"Of course she would," said he, with a smile and a bow; but a flush covered his face at the bare thought of their meeting.

"I'm not so certain you are telling the truth there," said she, laughing; "and yet you know there can be no offence in telling me I should not suit some one I have never seen; do, then, be frank with me, and say what would she think of me."

"To begin," said he, laughing, "she'd say you were very beautiful——"

"'Exquisitely beautiful,' was the phrase of that old gentleman that got into the next carriage; and I like it better."

"Well, exquisitely beautiful—the perfection of gracefulness—and highly accomplished."

"She'd not say any such thing; she'd not describe me like a governess; she'd probably say I was too demonstrative—that's a phrase in vogue just now—and hint that I was a little vulgar."

But I assure you," added she seriously, "I'm not so when I speak French. It is a stupid attempt on my part to catch up what I imagine must be English frankness when I talk the language that betrays me into all these outspoken extravagances. Let us talk French now."

"You'll have the conversation very nearly to yourself then," said Beecher, "for I'm a most indifferent linguist."

"Well, then, I must ask you to take my word for it, and believe that I'm well bred when I can afford it. But your sister—do tell me of her."

"She is 'très grande dame,' as you would call it," said Beecher; "very quiet, very cold, extremely simple in language, dresses splendidly, and never knows wrong people."

"Who are wrong people?"

"I don't exactly know how to define them; but they are such as are to be met with in society, not by claim of birth and standing, but because they are very rich, or very clever, in some way or other—people, in fact, that one has to ask who they are."

"I understand. But that must apply to a pretty wide circle of this world's habitants."

"So it does. A great part of Europe, and *all* America," said Beecher, laughing.

"And Papa and myself, how should we come through this formidable enquiry?"

"Well," said he, hesitating, "your father has always lived so much out of the world—this kind of world, I mean—so studiously retired, that the chances are that, in short——"

"In short—they'd ask, 'Who are these Davises?'" She threw into her face, as she spoke, such an admirable mimicry of proud pretension that Beecher laughed immoderately at it. "And when they'd ask it," continued she, "I'd be very grateful to you to tell me what to reply to them, since I own to you it is a most puzzling question to myself."

"Well," said Beecher in some embarrassment, "it is strange enough; but though your father and I are very old friends—as intimate as men can possibly be—yet he has never spoken to me about his family or connexions—nay, so far has he carried his reserve, that, until yesterday, I was not aware he had a daughter."

"You don't mean to say he never spoke of me?"

"Never to me, at least; and, as I have told you, I believe no one possesses a larger share of his confidence than myself."

"That *was* strange," said she, in deep reflection. Then after

a few minutes, she resumed: "If I had a story of my life I'd tell it you; but there is really none, or next to none. As a child, I was at school in Cornwall. Later on, Papa came and fetched me away to a small cottage near Walmer, where I lived with a sort of governess, who treated me with great deference—in short, observed towards me so much respect that I grew to believe I was something very exalted and distinguished—a sort 'Man in the Iron Mask,' whose pretensions had only to be known to convulse half Europe. Thence I passed over to the Pensionnat at the Three Fountains, where I found, if not the same homage, all the indications of my being regarded as a privileged individual. I had my maid; I enjoyed innumerable little indulgences none others possessed. I'm not sure whether the pony I rode at the riding-school was my own or not; I only know that none mounted him but myself. In fact, I was treated like one apart, and all Papa's letters only reiterated the same order—I was to want for nothing. Of course, these teachings could impress but one lesson—that I was a person of high rank and great fortune; and of this I never entertained a doubt. Now," added she, with more energy, "so far as I understand its uses, I *do* like wealth, and so far as I can fancy its privileges, I love rank; but if the tidings came suddenly upon me that I had neither one nor the other, I feel a sort of self-confidence that tells me I should not be dispirited or discouraged."

Beecher gazed at her with such admiration that a deep blush rose to her face, as she said, "You may put this heroism of mine to the test at once, by telling me frankly what you know about my station. Am I a Princess in disguise, Mr. Beecher, or am I only an item in the terrible category of what you have just called 'wrong people?'"

If the dread and terror of Grog Davis had been removed from Annesley Beecher's mind, there is no saying to what excesses of confidence the impulse of the moment might have carried him. He was capable of telling her any and every thing. For a few seconds, indeed, the thought of being her trusted friend so overcame his prudence, that he actually took her hand between his own, as the prelude of the revelations he was about to open, when suddenly a vision of Davis swept before his mind—Davis, in one of his moods of wrath, paroxysms of passion as they were, wherein he stopped at nothing. "He'd send me to the dock as a felon—he'd shoot me down like a dog," muttered he to himself, as, dropping her hand, he leaned back in the carriage.

She bent over, and looked calmly into his face. Her own was now perfectly pale and colourless, and then, with a faint, sad smile, she said,

"I see that you'd like to gratify me. It is through some sense of delicacy and reserve that you hesitate. Be it so. Let us be good friends now, and perhaps in time, we may trust each other thoroughly."

Beecher took her hand once more, and bending down, kissed it fervently. What a strange thrill was that that ran through his heart, and what an odd sense of desolation was it as he relinquished that fair, soft hand, as though it were that by its grasp he held on to life and hope together! "Oh," muttered he to himself, "why was not she—why was not he himself—twenty things that neither of them were?"

"I wish I could read your thoughts," said she, smiling gently at him.

"I wish to heaven you could!" cried he, with an honest energy that his nature had not known for many a day.

For the remainder of the way neither spoke, beyond some chance remark upon the country or the people. It was as though the bridge between them was yet too frail to cross, and that they trusted to time to establish that interchange of thought and confidence which each longed for.

"Here we are at the end of our journey!" said he, with a sigh, as they entered Aix.

"And the beginning of our friendship," said she, with a smile, while she held out her hand to pledge the contract.

So intently was Beecher gazing at her face that he did not notice the action.

"Won't you have it?" asked she, laughing.

"Which," cried he—"the hand, or the friendship?"

"I meant the friendship," said she, quietly.

"Tickets, Sir!" said the guard, entering. "We are at the station."

Annesley Beecher was soon immersed in all those bustling cares which attend the close of a journey; and though Lizzy seemed to enjoy the confusion and turmoil that prevailed, he was far from happy amidst the anxieties about baggage and horse-boxes, the maid and the groom each tormenting him in the interests of their several departments. All was, however, safe—not a cap-case was missing—Klepper "never lost a hair"—and they drove off to the Hotel of the Four Nations, in high spirits all.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE "FOUR NATIONS" AT AIX.

ALL the bustle of "settling down" in the hotel over, Annesley Beecher began to reflect a little on the singularity of his situation. The wondering admiration which had followed Lizzy Davis wherever she appeared on the journey seemed to have reached its climax now, and little knots and groups of lounging travellers were to be seen before the windows curious to catch a glance at this surpassing beauty. Now, had she been his *bonâ fide* property, he was just the man to derive the most intense enjoyment from this homage at second hand—he'd have exulted and triumphed in it. His position was, however, a very different one, and as merely her companion, while it exposed her to very depreciating judgments, it also necessitated on his part a degree of haughty defiance and championship for which he had not the slightest fancy whatever.

Annesley Beecher dragged into a row for Grog Davis's daughter—Beecher fighting some confounded Count or other about Lizzy Davis—Annesley shot by some Zouave Captain who insisted on waltzing with his "friend"—these were pleasant mind-pictures which he contemplated with the very reverse of enjoyment; and yet the question of her father's station away, he felt it was a cause wherein even one who had no more love for the "duello" than himself might well have perilled life. All her loveliness and grace had not been wasted when they could kindle up a little gleam of chivalry in the embers of that wasted heart!

He ran over in his mind all the Lady Julias and Georginas of the fashionable world. He bethought him of each of those who had been the queens of London seasons; and yet how vastly

were they all her inferiors. It was not alone that in beauty she eclipsed them, but she possessed besides the thousand nameless attractions of manner and gesture, a certain blended dignity and youthful gaiety, that made her seem the very ideal of high-born loveliness. He had seen Dukes' daughters who could not vie with her in these gifts; he had known Countesses immeasurably beneath her. From these thoughts he went on to others as to her future, and the kind of fellow that might marry her; for, strangely enough, in all his homage there mingled the ever-present memory of Grog and his pursuits. Mountjoy Stubbs might marry her—he has fifty thousand a year, and his father was a pawnbroker. Lockwood Harris might marry her—he got all his money from the slave trade. There were three or four more—all wealthy, and all equivocal in position: men to be seen in clubs—to be dined with and played with—fellows who had yachts at Cowes and grouse-lodges in Scotland, and yet in London were "nowhere." These men could within their own sphere do all they pleased—they could afford any extravagance they fancied—and what a delightful extravagance it would be to marry Lizzy Davis. Often as he had envied these men, he never did so more than now. *They* had no responsibilities of station ever hanging over them—no brothers in the Peerage to bully them about this—no sisters in waiting to worry them about that. They could always, as he phrased it, "paint their coach their own colour," without any fear of the Heralds' Office; and what better existence could a man wish for than a prolific fancy and unlimited funds to indulge it. "If I were Stubbs I'd marry her." This he said fully a dozen times over, and even confirmed it with an oath. And what an amiable race of people are the Stubbses of this habitable globe—how loosely do responsibilities sit upon them—how generously are they permitted every measure of extravagance and every violation of good taste! What a painful contrast did his mind draw between Stubb's condition and his own! There was a time, too, when the State repaired in some sort the injustice that younger sons groaned under—the public service was full of the Lord Charleses and the Honourables, who looked up to a paternal Government for their support; but now there was actually a run against them. Beecher argued himself so warmly into this belief, that he said aloud, "If I asked for something to-morrow they'd refuse me, just because I've a brother a Peer!"

The reader is already aware what a compensation he found for all his defeats and short-comings in life by arraigning the

injustice of the world. Downing-street—the Turf—Lackington—Tattersall's—the Horse Guards—and “the little hell in St. James's-street” were all in a league to crush him; but he'd show them “a turn round the corner yet,” he said; and with a saucy laugh of derision at all the malevolence of fortune, he set about dressing for dinner. Beecher was not only a very good-looking fellow, but he had **that** stamp of man of fashion on him which all the contamination of low habits and low associates had not effaced. His address was easy and unaffected; his voice pleasantly toned; his smile sufficiently ready; and his whole manner was an agreeable blending of deference with a sort of not ungraceful self-esteem. Negatives best describe the class of men he belonged to, and any real excellence he possessed was in not being a great number of things which form, unhappily, the social defects of a large section of humanity. He was never loud, never witty, never oracular, never anecdotic; and although the slang of the “Turf” and its followers clung to him, he threw out its “dialectics” so laughingly that he even seemed to be himself ridiculing the quaint phraseology he employed.

We cannot venture to affirm that our readers might have liked his company, but we are safe in asserting that Lizzy Davis did so. He possessed that very experience of life—London life—that amused her greatly. She caught up with an instinctive quickness the meaning of those secret springs which move society, and where, though genius and wealth are suffered to exercise their influence, the real power is alone centred in those who are great by station and hereditary claims. She saw that the great Brahmins of fashion maintained a certain exclusiveness which no pretensions ever breached, and that to this consciousness of an unassailable position was greatly owing all the dignified repose and serenity of their manner. She made him recount to her the style of living in the country houses of England—the crowds of visitors that came and went—the field sports—the home resources that filled up the day—while intrigues of politics or fashion went silently on beneath the surface. She recognised that in this apparently easy and indolent existence a great game was ever being played, and that all the workings of ambition, all the passions of love, and hate, and fear, and jealousy were “on the board.”

They had dined sumptuously. The equivocal position in which they appeared, far from detracting from the deference of the hotel people, served but to increase their homage. Experience had shown that such persons as they were supposed to be spent

most and paid best, and so they were served on the most splendid plate; waiters in full dress attended them; even to the bouquet of hothouse flowers left on "Mademoiselle's" napkin, all were little evidences of that consideration of which Annesley Beecher well knew the meaning.

"Will you please to enlighten my ignorance on one point, Mr. Beecher?" said she, as they sat over their coffee. "Is it customary in this rigid England, of which you have told me so many things, for a young unmarried lady to travel alone with a gentleman who is not even a relative?"

"When her father so orders it, I don't see that there can be much wrong in it," said he, with some hesitation.

"That is not exactly an answer to my question; although I may gather from it that the proceeding is at least unusual."

"I won't say it's quite customary," said Beecher; "but taking into account that I am a very old and intimate friend of your father's——"

"There must, then, have been some very pressing emergency to make Papa adopt such a course," interrupted she.

"Why so?" asked he. "Is the arrangement so very distasteful to you?"

"Perhaps not—perhaps I like it very well. Perhaps I find you very agreeable—very amusing—very——what shall I say?"

"Respectful."

"If you like that epithet, I have no objection to put it in your character. Yet still do I come back to the thought that Papa could scarcely have struck out this plan without some grave necessity. Now, I should like much to know what that is, or was." Beecher made no sign of reply, and she quickly asked, "Do you know his reasons?"

"Yes," said he, gravely; "but I prefer that you should not question me about them."

"I can't help that, Mr. Beecher," said she, in that half-careless tone she sometimes used. "Just listen to me for one moment," said she, earnestly, and fixing her eyes fully on him—"just hear me attentively. From what I have gathered from your account of England and its habits, I am certainly now doing that which, to say the least, is most unusual and unwarrantable. Now, either there is a reason so grave for this that it makes a choice of evils imperative—and, therefore, I ought to have my choice—or there is another even worse interpretation—at least, a more painful one—to come."

"Which is?" cried he

"That I am not of that station to which such propriety attaches of necessity."

She uttered these words with a cold sternness and determination that actually made Beecher tremble. "It was Davis's daughter spoke there," thought he. "They are the words of one who declares that, no matter what be the odds against her, she is ready to meet the whole world in arms. What a girl it is!" muttered he, with a sense of mingled fear and admiration.

"Well, Mr. Beecher," said she, at length, "I *do* think you owe me a little frankness; short as our acquaintance has been, I, at least, have talked in all the freedom of old friendship. Pray show me that I have not been indiscreet."

"Hang me, if I know what to say or do!" cried Beecher, in dire perplexity. "If I were to tell you why your father hurried away from Brussels, he'd bring me to book very soon. I promise you."

"I do not ask that," interrupted she, eagerly. "It is upon the other point my interest is most engaged." He looked blankly at her, for he really did not catch to what she alluded. "I want you to tell me, in one word, who are the Davises? Who are we? If we are not recognisable by that high world you have told me of, who, then, are our equals? Remember, that by an honest answer to my question, you give guidance and direction to my future life. Do not shrink from fear of giving me pain—there is no such pain as uncertainty; so be frank."

Beecher covered his face with his hands to think over his reply. He did not dare to look at her, so fearful was he of her reading his very embarrassment.

"I will spare you, Sir," said she, smiling half superciliously; "but if you had known me a little longer, or a little better, you had seen how needless all this excessive caution on your part. I have more of what you call 'pluck' than you give me credit for."

"No, by Jove! that you haven't," cried Beecher; "you have more real courage than all the men I ever knew."

"Show me, then, that you are not deficient in the quality, and give me a plain answer to a plain question. Who are we?"

"I've just told you," said Beecher, whose confusion now made him stammer and stutter at every word—"I have just told you that your father never spoke to me about his relations. I really don't know his county, nor anything about his family."

"Then it only remains to ask, What are we? or, in easier

words, Has my father any calling or profession? Come, Sir, so much you can certainly tell me."

"Your father was a Captain in a West India regiment, and, when I met him first, he was a man about town—went to all the races—made his bets—won and lost, like the rest of us—always popular—knew everybody."

"A 'sporting character,' in short—isn't that the name newspapers give it?" said she, with a malicious twinkle of the eye.

"By Jove! how you hit a thing off at once!" exclaimed Beecher, in honest ecstasy at her shrewdness.

"So, then, I am at the end of the riddle at last," said she, musingly, as she arose and walked the room in deep meditation. "Far better to have told me so many a year ago—far better to have let me conform to this station when I might have done so easily, and without a pang!" A bitter sigh escaped her at the last word, and Beecher arose and joined her.

"I hope you are not displeased with me, my dear Miss Davis," said he, with a trembling voice; "I don't know what I'd not rather suffer than offend you."

"You have *not* offended me," said she, coldly.

"Well, I mean, than I'd pain you—than I'd say anything that should distress you. You know, after all, it wasn't quite fair to push me so hard."

"Are you forgetting, Sir," broke she in, haughtily, "that you have really told me next to nothing, and that I am left to gather from mere insinuations that there is something in our condition your delicacy shrinks from explaining?"

"Not a bit of it," chimed he in, quickly. "The best men in England are on the Turf, and a good book on the Oaks isn't within reach of the income-tax. Your father's dealings are with all the swells in the Peerage."

"So there is a partnership in the business, Sir," said she, with a quiet irony; "and is the Honourable Mr. Beecher one of the company?"

"Well—ha—I suppose—I ought to say yes," muttered he, in deep confusion. "We do a stroke of work together now and then—on the square, of course, I mean."

"Pray don't expose the secrets of the firm, Sir. I am even more interested than yourself that they should be conducted with discretion. There is only one other question I have to ask, and as it purely concerns myself, you'll not refuse me a reply. Knowing our station in life, as I now see you know it, by what presumption did you dare to trifle with my girlish ignorance,

and lead me to fancy that I might yet move in a sphere which in your heart you knew I was excluded from?"

Overwhelmed with shame and confusion, and stunned by the embarrassment of a dull man in a difficulty, Beecher stood unable to utter a word.

"To say the least, Sir, there was levity in this," said she in a tone of sorrowful meaning; "but, perhaps, you never meant it so."

"Never, upon my oath, never!" cried he, eagerly. "Whatever I said, I uttered in all frankness and sincerity. I know London town just as well as any man living, and I'll stand five hundred to fifty there's not your equal in it—and that's giving the whole field against the odds. All I say is, you shall go to the Queen's Drawing-room——"

"I am not likely to do so, Sir," said she, with a haughty gesture, and left the room.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

AIX-LA-CHAPELLE.

THREE days passed over—three days varied with all the incidents that go to make up a longer existence—and Beecher and his fair charge were still in Aix. If they forbore to speak to each other of the strange situation in which they found themselves, they were not the less full of it. Neither telegraph nor letter came from Davis, and Beecher's anxiety grew hourly greater. There was scarcely an eventuality his mind had not pictured. Davis was arrested and carried off to prison in Brussels—was waylaid and murdered in the Ardennes—was ill, dying in some unheard-of village—involved in some other row, and obliged to keep secret—arrested on some old charge; in fact, every mishap that a fertile fancy could devise had befallen him, and now only remained the question, what was he himself to do with Lizzy Davis?

Whether it was that her present life was an agreeable change from the discipline of the Three Fountains, or that the new objects of interest about her engaged her to the exclusion of much thought, or that some higher philosophy of resignation supported her, but certain is it she neither complained of the delay nor exhibited any considerable impatience at her father's silence. She went about sight-seeing, visited churches and galleries, strolled on the Promenade before dinner, and finished with the theatre at night, frankly owning that it was a kind of do-nothing existence that she enjoyed greatly. Her extraordinary beauty was already a town talk; and the passages of the hotel were crowded as she went down to her carriage, and to her box at the Opera were directed almost every glass in the house. This, however, is a homage not always respectful, and

in the daring looks of the men, and the less equivocal glances of the women, Beecher read the judgment that had been pronounced upon her. Her manner, too, in public, had a certain fearless gaiety about it that was sure to be severely commented on, while the splendour of her dress was certain to be not less mercifully interpreted.

To have the charge of a casket of jewels through the thieves' quarter of London was the constant similitude that rose to Beecher's mind as he descended the stairs at her side. To be obliged to display her to the wondering gaze of some hundred idlers, the dissipated and debauched loungers of a watering-place, men of bad lives and worse tongues; to mark the staring insolence of some, and the quizzical impertinence of others; to see how narrowly each day they escaped some more overt outrage from that officious politeness that is tendered to those in equivocal positions, were tortures that half maddened him. Nor could he warn her of the peril they stood in, or dare to remonstrate about many little girlish ways which savoured of levity. The scene of the theatre in Brussels was never off his mind, and the same one idea continually haunted him, that poor Hamilton's fate might be his own. The characterless men of the world are always cowards as to responsibility—they feel that there is a flaw in their natures that must smash them if pressed upon; and so was it here. Beecher's life was actual misery, and each morning he awoke the day seemed full of menace and misfortune to him. In his heart, he knew that if an emergency arose he should be found wanting; he'd either not think of the right thing, or have pluck for it if he even thought it; and then, whatever trouble or mishap he came through, there still remained worse behind—the settlement with Grog himself at the end.

Like most persons who seek the small consolation of falling back on their own foresight, he called to mind how often he had said to himself that nothing but ill could come of journeying with Grog Davis—he knew it—he was sure of it. A fellow to conspire with about a "plant"—a man to concert with on a race, or a "safe thing with the cards," was not exactly a meet travelling companion, and he fretted over the fatal weakness that had induced his acceptance of him. They had only just started, and their troubles had already begun! Even if Davis himself were there, matters might not be so bad. Grog was always ready to "turn out" and have a shot with any one. It was a sort of pastime he rather liked when nothing else was

stirring, it seemed like keeping his hand in; but, confound the fellow! he had gone off, and left in his place one who had a horror of hair-triggers, and shuddered at the very thought of a shot-wound.

He was far too conversant with the habits of *demi-monde* existence not to see that the plot was thickening, and fresh dangers clustering round him. The glances in the street were hourly growing more familiar—the looks were half recognitions. Half a dozen times in the morning, well-dressed and well-bearded strangers had bolted into their sitting-room in mistake, and, while apologising for their blunder, delayed unnecessarily long over the explanation.

The waiter significantly mentioned that Prince Bottoffsky was then stopping at the hotel, with seven carriages and eighteen servants. The same intelligent domestic wondered they never went to see Count Czaptowitch's camelias—"he had sent a bouquet of them that very day to her Ladyship." And Beecher groaned in his spirit as the fellow produced it.

"I see how it's all to end," muttered he as he paced the room, unable any longer to conceal the misery that was consuming him. "One of those confounded foreigners will come swaggering up to talk to her on the Promenade, and then I'm 'in for it.' It's all Davis's fault. It's all *her* fault. Why can't she look like other people—dress like them—walk like them? What stuff and nonsense it is for *her* to be going about the world like a Princess Royal. It was only last night she wore a Brussels lace shawl at the Opera that cost five thousand francs, and when it caught on a nail in the box and was torn, she laughed, and said, 'Annette will be charmed with this disaster, for she was always coveting this lace, and wondering when she was to have it.' That's the fine 'bringing-up' old Grog is so proud of! If she were a Countess in her own right, with ten thousand a year, she'd be a bad bargain!"

Ah, Beecher! your heart never went with you when you made this cruel speech; you uttered it in spleen and bitterness, but not in sincerity; for already in that small compartment of your nature where a few honest affections yet lingered *she was* treasured, and, had you known how to do it, you would have loved her. Poor devil as he was, Life was a hard battle to him; always over head and ears in debt; protested bills meeting him at every moment; duns rising before him at every turn. Levity was to him, as to many, a mere mask over Fear, and he walked the world in the hourly terror that any moment might bring him

to shame and ruin. If he were a few minutes alone, his melancholy was almost despair, and over and over had he pictured to his mind a scene in the police-court, where he was called on to find full and sufficient bail for his appearance on trial. From such sorrowing thoughts he made his escape to rush into society—anywhere, anyhow—and, by the revulsion of his mind, came that rattling and boisterous gaiety that made him seem the most light-hearted fellow in existence. Such men are always making bonfires of their household Gods, and have nothing to greet them when they are at home.

What a fascination must Lizzy Davis have exercised over such a mind! Her beauty and her gracefulness would not have been enough without her splendid dressing, and that indescribable elegance of manner which was native to her. Then how she amused him!—what droll caricatures did she sketch of the queer originals of the place—the bearded old Colonels, or the pretentious loungers that frequented the “Cursaal!” How witty the little epigrams by which she accompanied them, and how charmingly at a moment would she sit down at the piano and sing for him anything, from a difficult “scena” from Verdi to some floating barcarole of Venice! She could—let us tell it in one breath—make him laugh; and oh, dearly valued reader! what would you or I give for the company of any one who could do as much? The world is full of learned people, and clever people. There are Bourse men, and pre-Raphaelite men, and Old-red-sandstone men, and Greek particle men, but where are the pleasant people one used to chat with long ago, who, though talking of mere common-places, threw out little sparks of fun—fire-flies in the dark copses—giving to what they said that smack of epigram that spiced talk but never over-seasoned it, whose genial sympathy sent a warm life-blood through every theme, and whose outspoken heartiness refreshed one after a cold bath of polite conventionalities. If they still exist upon this earth, they must be hiding themselves, wisely seeing it is not an age to suit them; they lie quiet under the ice, patiently hibernating till another summer may call them forth to vitality.

Now Lizzy Davis could make Beecher laugh in his lowest and gravest moments; droll situations and comical conceits came in showers over her mind, and she gave them forth with all the tact of a consummate actress. Her mimicry, too, was admirable, and thus he who rarely reflected, and never read, found in her ready talents resources against all weariness and *ennui*. What a girl she was!—how perfectly she would become any—the very

highest—station! what natural dignity in her manner!—and— Then, after a pause, he murmured, “What a fortune she’d make on the stage! Why, there’s nothing to compare with her—she’s as much beyond them all in beauty as in genius!” And so he sat about thinking how, by marrying her, a man might make a “deuced good thing of it.” There’s no saying what Webster wouldn’t offer; and then there was America, always a “safe card;” not that it would do for himself to think of such a thing. Lackington would never speak to him again. All his family would cut him dead: he hadn’t an acquaintance would recognize him after such disgrace.

“Old Grog is so confoundedly well known!” muttered he—“the scoundrel is so notorious!” Still, there were fellows wouldn’t mind that—hard-up men, who had done everything, and found all failure. He knew——“Let us see,” said he to himself, beginning to count on his fingers all the possible candidates for her hand. “There’s Cranshaw Craven at Caen, on two hundred a year; he’d marry her, and never ask to see her if she’d settle twenty thousand francs a year on him. Brownlow Gore would marry her, and for a mere five hundred too, for he wants to try that new martingale at Ems; he’s certain he’d break the bank with less. Foley would marry her; but, to be sure, he has a wife somewhere, and she might object to that! I’d lay an even fifty,” cried he, in ecstasy, at the bright thought, “Tom Beresford would marry her just to get out of the Fleet!”

“What does that wonderful calculation mean?” cried she, suddenly, as she saw him still reckoning on his fingers. “What deep process of reasoning is my learned guardian engaged in?”

“I’d give you a long time to guess, said he, laughing.

“Am I personally concerned in it?” asked she.

“Yes, that you are!”

“Well,” said she, after a pause, “you are counting over the days we have passed, or are still to pass here?”

“No, not *that*!”

“You are computing, perhaps, one by one, all your fashionable friends who would be shocked by my levity—that’s the phrase, I believe—meaning those outspoken impertinences you encourage me to utter about everything and everybody!”

“Far from it. I was——”

“Oh! of course, you were charmed,” broke she in; “and so you ought to be, when one performs so dangerous a trick to amuse you. The audience always applauds the rope-dancer that perils his neck; and you’d be worse than ungrateful not to

screen me when I'm satirised. But it may relieve somewhat the load of obligation when I say that I utter these things just to please myself. I bear the world no ill-will, it is true; but I'm very fond of laughing at it."

"In the name and on behalf of that respectable community, let me return you my thanks," said he, bowing.

"Remember," said she, "how little I really know of what I ridicule, and so let my ignorance atone for my ill-nature; and now, to come back, what was it that you were counting so patiently on your fingers? Not *my* faults, I'm certain, or you'd have had both hands."

"I'm afraid I could scarcely tell you," said he, "though somehow I feel that if I knew you a very little longer, I could tell you almost anything."

"I wish you could tell me that this pleasant time was coming. What is this?" asked she, as the waiter entered, and presented her with a visiting card.

"Monsieur the Count desires to know if Mademoiselle will receive him," said the man.

"What, how? What does this mean?" exclaimed Beecher, in terror and astonishment.

"Yes," said she, turning to the waiter; "say, 'with pleasure.'"

"Gracious mercy!" exclaimed Beecher, "you don't know what you're doing. Have you seen this person before?"

"Never!"

"Never heard of him!"

"Never," said she with a faint smile, for the sight of his terror amused her.

"But who is he, then? How has he dared——"

"Nay," said she, holding behind her back the visiting-card, which he endeavoured to snatch from her hand—"this is *my* secret!"

"This is intolerable!" cried Beecher. "What is your father to think of your admitting a person to visit you? an utter stranger—a fellow Heaven knows——"

At this moment, as if to answer in the most palpable form the question he was propounding, a somewhat sprucely-dressed man, middle-aged and comely, entered; and, passing Beecher by with the indifference he might have bestowed on a piece of furniture, advanced to where Lizzy was standing, and taking her hand, pressed it reverently to his lips.

So far from resenting the liberty, she smiled most courteously

on him, and motioned to him to take a seat on the sofa beside her.

"I can't stand this, by Jove!" said Beecher, aloud; while, with an assumption of courage his heart little responded to, he walked straight up to the stranger. "You understand English, I hope?" said he, in very indifferent French.

"Not a syllable," replied the other, in the same language. "I only know 'all right,'" and he laughed, pleasantly, as he uttered the words in an imitation of English.

"Come, I'll not torture you any longer," said Lizzy, laughing, "read *that*." And she handed him the card, whereon, in her father's writing, there was, "See the Count; he'll tell you everything.—C.D."

"I have heard the name before—Count Lienstahl," said Beecher to himself. "Has he seen your father? Where is he?" asked he, eagerly.

"He'll inform me on all, if you'll just give him time," said she; while the Count, with an easy volubility, was pouring out a flow of words perfectly unintelligible to poor Beecher.

Whether it was the pleasure of the tidings he brought, or the delicious enjoyment of once more hearing and replying in that charming tongue that she loved so dearly, but Lizzy ceased even to look at Beecher, and only occupied herself with her new acquaintance.

Now, while we leave her thus pleasantly engaged, let us present the visitor to our reader.

Nothing could be less like the traditional "Continental Count" than the plump, close-shaven, blue-eyed gentleman who sat beside Lizzy Davis, with an expression of *bonhomie* in his face that might have graced a squire of Devon. He was neither frogged nor moustached; his countenance neither boded ill to the Holy Alliance, nor any close intimacy with billiards or dice-boxes. A pleasant, easy-tempered, soft-natured man he seemed, with a ready smile and a happy laugh, and an air of yielding good-humour about him that appeared to vouch for his being one none need ever dispute with. If there were few men less generally known throughout Europe, there was not one whose origin, family, fortune, and belonging were wrapped in more complete obscurity. Some said he was a Pomeranian, others called him a Swede; many believed him Russian, and a few, affecting deeper knowledge, declared he was from Dalmatia. He was a Count, however, of somewhere, and as certainly was he one who had the *entrée* to all the best circles of the Continent,

member of its most exclusive clubs, and the intimate of those who prided themselves on being careful in their friendships. While his manners were sufficiently good to pass muster anywhere, there was about him a genial kindliness—a sort of perennial pleasantries—that was welcome everywhere; he brought to society that inestimable gift of adhesiveness by which cold people and stiff people are ultimately enabled to approximate and understand each other. No matter how dull and ungenial the salon, he was scarcely across the doorway when you saw that an element of social kindliness had just been added, and in his little caressing ways and coaxing inquiries you recognised one who would not let condescension crush nor coldness chill him. If young people were delighted to see one so much their senior indulging in all the gay and light frivolities of life, older folk were gratified to find themselves so favourably represented by one able to dance, sing, and play like the youngest in company. So artfully, too, did he contribute his talent to society, that no thought of personal display could ever attach to him. It was all good-nature; he played to amuse *you*—he danced to gratify some one else; he was full of little attentions of a thousand kinds, and you no more thought of repayment than you'd have dreamed of thanking the blessed sun for his warmth or his daylight. Such men are the *bonbons* of humanity, and even they who do not care for sweet things are pleased to see them.

If his birth and origin were mysterious, far more so were his means of life. Nobody ever heard of his agent or his banker. He neither owned nor earned, and yet there he was, as well-dressed, as well cared for, and as pleasant a gentleman as you could see. He played a little, but it was notorious that he was ever a loser. He was too constantly a winner in the great game of life to be fortunate as a gambler, and he could well afford to laugh at this one little mark of spitefulness in Fortune. Racing and races were a passion with him; but he loved sport for itself, not as a speculation—so at least he said; and when he threw his arm over your shoulder, and said anything in that tone of genial simplicity that was special to him, I'd like to have seen the man—or, still more, the woman—who wouldn't have believed him.

The Turf—like poverty—teaches one to know strange bed-fellows; and this will explain how the Count and Grog Davis became acquaintances, and something more.

The grand intelligence who discovered the great financial

problem of France—the *Crédit Mobilier*—has proclaimed to the world that the secret lay in the simple fact, that there were industrial energies which needed capital, and capital which needed industry, and that all he avowed to accomplish was to bring these two distant, but all necessary, elements into close union and co-operation. Now, something of the same kind moved Grog and the Count to cement their friendship: each saw that the other supplied some want of his own nature, and before they had passed an hour together they ratified an alliance. An instinct whispered to each, “We are going the same journey in life, let us travel together;” and some very profitable tours did they make in company!

His presence now was on a special mission from Davis, whom he just met at Trèves, and who despatched him to request his daughter to come on to Carlsruhe, where he would await her. The Count was charged to explain, in some light easy way of his own, why her father had left Brussels so abruptly; and he was also instructed to take Annesley Beecher into his holy keeping, and not suffer him to fall into indiscretions, or adventure upon speculations of his own devising.

Lizzy thought him “charming”—far more worldly-wise people than Lizzy had often thought the same. There was a bubbling fountain of good-humour about him that seemed inexhaustible. He was always ready for any plan that promised pleasure. Unlike Beecher, who knew nobody, the Count walked the street in a perpetual salutation—bowing, hand-shaking, and sometimes kissing, as he went—and in that strange polyglot that he talked he murmured as he went, “Ah, lieber Freund!”—“Come sta?”—“Addio!”—“Mon meilleur ami!” to each that passed; so that veritably the world did seem only peopled with those who loved him.

As for Beecher, notwithstanding a certain distrust at the beginning, he soon fell captive to a manner that few resisted; and though the intercourse was limited to shaking hands and smiling at each other, the Count’s pleasant exclamation of “All right!” with a jovial slap on the shoulder, made him feel that he was a “regular trump,” and a man “to depend on.”

One lurking thought alone disturbed this esteem—he was jealous of his influence over Lizzy; he marked the pleasure with which she listened to him—the eager delight she showed when he came—her readiness to sing or play for him. Beecher saw all these in sorrow and bitterness; and though twenty times a day he asked himself, “What the deuce is it to me?”

How can it possibly matter to *me* whom she cares for?"—the haunting dread never left his mind, and became his very torturer. But why should he worry himself about it at all? The fellow did what he liked with every one. Rivers, the sulky training groom, that would not have let a Royal Highness see "the horse," actually took Klepper out and galloped him for the Count. The austere landlady of the inn was smiles and courtesy to him: even to that unpolished class, the hackney coachmen, his blandishments extended, and they vied with each other who should serve him.

"We are to start for Wiesbaden to-morrow," said Lizzy to Beecher.

"Why so—who says so?"

"The Count——"

"Si, si, andiamo—all right!" cried the Count, laughing; and the march was ordered.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A FOREIGN COUNT.

THE announcement of Count Lienstahl's arrival at Wiesbaden was received with rejoicing. "Now we shall open the season in earnest. We shall have balls, pic-nics, races, hurdle-matches, gipsy parties, excursions by land and water! He'll manage everything and everybody." Such were the exclamations that resounded along the Promenade as the party drove up to the hotel. Within less than an hour the Count had been to Beberich to visit the reigning Duke, he had kissed hands with half a dozen Serene Highnesses, made his bow to the Chief Minister and the Governor of Wiesbaden, and come back to dinner all smiles and delight at the condescension and kindness of the Court and the capital.

If Lienstahl's popularity was great, he only shared a very humble portion of public attention when they appeared at the table d'hôte. There Lizzy Davis attracted every look, and the fame of her beauty was already wide-spread. Such was the eagerness to obtain place at the table, that the most extravagant bribes were offered for a seat, and a well-known elegant of Vienna actually paid a waiter five louis to cede his napkin to him and let him serve in his stead. Beecher was anything but gratified at these demonstrations. If his taste was offended, his fears were also excited. "Something bad must come of it," was his own muttered reflection; and as they retired after dinner to take their coffee, he showed very palpably his displeasure.

"Eh, caro mio—all right?" said the Count, gaily, as he threw an arm over his shoulder.

"No, by Jove!—all wrong. I don't like it. It's not the style of thing I fancy." And here his confusion overwhelmed him,

and he stopped abruptly; for the Count, seating himself at the piano, and rattling off a lively prelude, began a well-known air from a popular French vaudeville, of which the following is a rude version:

“With a lovely face beside you,
You can't walk this world far,
But from those who've closely eyed you,
Comes the question—Who you are?
And though Dowagers will send you
Cutting looks and glances keen,
The men will comprehend you
When you say—‘C'est ma cousine.’”

He was preparing for the second verse when Lizzy entered the room, and turning at once to her, he poured forth some sentences with all that voluble rapidity he possessed.

“So,” said she, addressing Beecher, “it seems that you are shocked, or horrified, or your good taste is outraged, by certain demonstrations of admiration for me exhibited by the worthy public of this place; and, shall I own to you, I liked it. I thought it very nice, and very flattering, and all that, until I thought it was a little—a very little, perhaps, but still a little—impertinent. Was that your opinion?”

There was a blunt frankness about this question, uttered in such palpable honesty of intention, that Beecher felt overwhelmed at once.

“I don't know the Continent like your friend there. I can't pretend to offer you advice and counsel like him; but if you really ask me, I'd say, ‘Don't dine below any more—don't go to the rooms of an evening—don't frequent the Promenade——’”

“What would you say to my taking the veil, for I fancy I've some vocation that way?” And then, turning to the Count, she said something in French, at which he laughed immoderately.

Whether vexed with himself or with her, or, more probably still, annoyed by not being able to understand what passed in a foreign language, Beecher took his hat and left the room. Without his ever suspecting it, a new pang was just added to his former griefs, and he was jealous! It is very rare that a man begins by confessing a sense of jealousy to his own heart; he usually ascribes the dislike he feels to a rival to some defect or some blemish in his nature. He is a coarse fellow—rude—vulgar, a coxcomb, or, worst of all, a bore. In some such disposition as this Beecher quitted the town, and strolled away into the country. He felt he hated the Count, and yet he could not perceive why.

Lienstahl possessed a vast number of the qualities he was generally disposed to like. He was gay, lively, light-hearted, never out of humour, never even thoughtful—his was that easy temperament that seemed to adapt itself to every phase of life. What was it, then? What could it be that he disliked about him? It was somewhat "cool," too, of Grog, to send this fellow over without even the courtesy of a line to himself. "Serve him right—serve them all right—if I were to cut my lucky;" and he ruminated long and anxiously over the thought. His present position was anything but pleasant or flattering to him. For aught *he* knew, the Count and Lizzy Davis passed their time laughing at his English ignorance of all things foreign. By dint of a good deal of such self-tormenting, he at last reached that point whereat the very slightest additional impulse would have determined him to decamp from his party, and set out, all alone, for Italy. The terror of a day of reckoning with Davis was, however, a dread that he could never shake off. Grog the unforgiving, the inexorable! Grog, whose greatest boast in his vain-glorious moments was that, in the "long run," no man ever got the better of him, would assuredly bring him to book one day or other; and he knew the man's nature well enough to be aware that no fear of personal consequences would ever balk him on the road to a vengeance.

Sometimes the thought occurred to him that he would make a frank and full confession to Lackington of all his delinquencies, even to that terrible "count" by which the fame and fortune of his house might be blasted for ever. If he could but string up his courage to this pitch, Lackington might "pull him through," Lackington would see that "there was nothing else for it," and so on. It is marvellous what an apparent strength of argument lies in those slang expressions familiar to certain orders of men. These conventionalities seem to settle at once questions which, if treated in more befitting phraseology, would present the gravest difficulties.

He walked on and on, and at last gained a pine wood which skirted the base of a mountain, and soon lost himself in its dark recesses. Gloomier than the place itself were the tone of his reflections. All that he might have been, all that lay so easily within his reach, all that life once offered him, contrasted bitterly with what he now saw himself. Conscience, it is true, suggested few of his present pangs; he believed—ay, sincerely believed—that he had been more "sinned against than sinning." Such a one had "let him in" here, such another "had sold him"

there. In his reminiscences he saw himself trustful, generous, and confiding, while the world—the great globe that includes Tattersall's, Goodwood, Newmarket, and Ascot, was little better than a nest of knaves and vagabonds.

Why couldn't Lackington get him something abroad—in the Brazils or Lima, for instance? He wasn't quite sure where they were, but they were far away, he thought—places too remote for Grog Davies to hunt him out, and whence he could give the great Grog a haughty defiance. They—how it would have puzzled him to say who “they” were—they couldn't refuse Lackington if he asked. He was always voting and giving his proxies, and doing all manner of things for them; he made a speech, too, last year, at Hoxton, and gave a lecture upon something that must have served them. Lackington would begin the old story about character; “but who had character now-a-days?” “Take down the Court Guides,” cried he, aloud, “and let *me* give you the private life and adventures of each as you read out the names. Talk of *me*! why what have I done equal to what Lockwood, Hepton, Bulkleigh, Frank Melton, and fifty more have done? No, no; for public life, now, they must do as a sergeant of the Ninety-fifth told me t'other day, ‘We're obliged to take 'em little, Sir, and glad to get 'em too!’”

It might be that there was something grateful to his feelings, re-assuring to his heart, in this reflection, for he walked along now more briskly, and his head higher than before. Without being aware, he had already gone some miles from the town, and now found himself in one of those long grassy alleys which traversed the dense wood in various directions. As he looked down the narrow road which seemed like the vast aisle of some Gothic cathedral, he felt a sort of tremulous motion beneath his feet, and then the moment after he could detect the measured tramp of a horse at speed. A slight bend of the alley had hitherto shut out the view, but suddenly a dark object came sweeping round the turn and advancing towards him. Half to secure a position, and half with the thought of watching what this might portend, Beecher stepped aside into the dense brushwood at the side of the alley, and which effectually hid him from view. He had barely time to make his retreat when a horse swept past him at full stride, and with one glance he recognised him as “Klepper.” It was Rivers, too, who rode him, sitting high over the saddle and with his hands low, as if racing. Now it was but that very morning Rivers had told him that the horse

was not "quite right," a bit heavy or so about the eyes, "out of sorts" he called it, and there he was now flying along at the top of his speed in full health and condition. It needed but the fortieth part of this to suggest a suspicion to such a mind as his, and with the speed of lightning there flashed across him the notion of a "cross." He, Annesley Beecher, was to be "put into the hole," to be "squared," and "nobbled," and all the rest of it! It did not indeed occur to him how very unprofitably such an enterprise would reward its votaries, that it would be a most gratuitous iniquity to "push him to the wall," that all the ingenious malevolence in the world could never make the venture "pay," his self-conceit smothered these reasonings, and he determined to watch and to see how the scheme was to be developed. He had not to wait long in suspense; at the bend of the alley where the horse had disappeared, two horsemen were now seen slowly approaching him. As they drew nearer, Beecher could mark that they were in close, and what seemed confidential, conversation. One he quickly recognised to be the Count, the other, to his amazement, was Spicer, of whose arrival at Aix he had not heard anything. They moved so slowly past the spot where he was standing that he could gather some of the words that escaped them, although being in French. The sound of his own name quickly caught his ear. It was the Count spoke as they came up:

"He is a *pauvre Sire*, this Beecher, and I don't yet see what use he can be to us."

"Davis likes him, or at least he wants him," replied Spicer, and that's enough for us. Depend upon it, Grog makes no mistakes." The other laughed, but what he replied was lost in the distance.

It was some time ere Beecher could summons resolution to leave the place of his concealment and set out towards the town. Of all the sentiments that swayed and controlled him, none had such a perfect mastery over his nature as distrust. It was, in fact, the solitary lesson his life's experience had taught him. He fancied that he could trace every mistake he had ever made—every failure he had ever incurred—to some unlucky movement of credulity on his own part, and that "believing" was the one great error of his whole life. He had long been of opinion that high station and character had no greater privileges than the power they possessed of imposing a certain trustfulness in their pledges, and that the great "pull" a Duke had over a "Leg" was that his Grace would be believed in preference. But it also

appeared to him that rogues were generally true to each other; now if this last hope were to be taken away, what was there left in life to cling to? Spicer had said, "Davis wants him." What did that mean?—what could it mean? Simply that Grog found him, not an associate or colleague, but a convenient tool. What an intolerable insult, that he, the Honourable Annesley Beecher, whose great connexions rambled through half Debrett, was to be accounted a mere outpost sentry in the corps of Grog Davis!

His anger increased as he went along. The wound to his self-esteem was in the very tenderest spot of his nature. Had any man ever sacrificed so much to be a sharp fellow as he had? Who had, like him, given up friends, station, career, and prospects? Who had voluntarily surrendered the society of his equals, and gone down to the very dregs of mankind, just to learn that one great secret? And was it to be all in vain? Was all his training and teaching to go for nothing? Was he, after descending to the ranks, to discover that he never could learn the manual exercise? How often, in the gloomiest hours of his disappointment, had he hugged the consolation to his heart that Grog Davis knew and valued him! "Ask G. D. if I'm a flat," was the proud rejoinder he would hurl at any attempt to depreciate his shrewdness. What was to become of him, then, if the bank that held all his fortune were to fail? If Beecher deemed a sharp fellow the most enviable of all mortals, so he regarded a dupe as the meanest and most miserable, and the very thought of such a fate was almost maddening. "No, confound me! they shan't have it to say that they 'landed' A. B.; they shall never boast that they nobbled *me*," cried he, warming with the indignation that worked within him. "I'm off, and this time without beat of drum. Davis may do his worst. I'll lie by snug for a year or two. There must be many a safe spot in Germany or Italy, where a man may defy detection." And then he ran over in his mind all the successful devices he had seen adopted for disguising a man's appearance. Howard Vane had a wig and whiskers that left him unrecognised by his own mother; Crofton Campbell travelled with Inspector Field in search of himself, all by means of a nose. It was wonderful what science was accomplishing every day for the happiness and welfare of mankind!

The plan of escape was not without its difficulties, however. First of all, he had no money. Davis had given him merely enough to pay railroad fares and the charges incidental to the road, and he was living at the hotel on Credit. This was a

serious obstacle, but it was also one which had so often before occurred in Beecher's experience, that he was not so much dismayed by it as many another might have been. "Money was always to be had somehow," was a golden rule of his philosophy, the somehow meaning that it resolved itself into a simple question of skill and address of the individual in want of it. Aix was a considerable town, much frequented by strangers, and must doubtless possess all the civilising attributes of other cities—viz., Jews, money-lenders, and discounters. Then, the landlord of the inn—it was always customary to give him the preference in these cases. He'd surely not refuse an advance of a few hundred francs to a man who came accompanied as he was. Klepper alone was good security for ten times more than he needed. Must it be confessed that he felt elevated in his own esteem when he had resolved upon this scheme. It savoured of shrewdness—that great touchstone of capacity which he revered so highly. "They shall see if I'm a Flat, this time," chuckled he to himself, as he went along; and he stepped out briskly in the excitement of self-approval. Then he went over in his mind all the angry commentaries that would be passed upon his flight—the passionate fury of Grog, the amazement of Spicer, the almost incredulous surprise of the Count—till at last he came to Lizzy; and then, for the first time in all his calculations, a sense of shame sent the colour to his cheek, and he blushed till his face grew crimson. "Ay, by Jove! what will *she* think?" muttered he, in a voice of honest truthfulness. How he should appear to her—how he should stand in her estimation—after such an ignoble desertion, was a thought not to be encountered by self-praises of his cunning. What would her "pluck" say to his "cowardice?" was a terrible query.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A COUNTRY VISIT.

LET us now return to the Hermitage, and the quiet lives of those who dwelt there. Truly, to the traveller gazing down from some lofty point of the Glengariff road upon that lowly cottage deep buried in its beech wood, and only showing rare glimpses of its trellised walls, nothing could better convey the idea of estrangement from the world and its ambitions. From the little bay, where the long low waves swept in measured cadence on the sands, to the purple-clad mountains behind, the scene was eminently calm and peaceful. The spot was precisely one to suggest the wisdom of that choice which prefers tranquil obscurity to the struggle and conflict of the great world. What a happy existence would you say was theirs, who could drop down the stream of a life surrounded with objects of such beauty, free to indulge each rising fancy, and safe from all the collisions of mankind!—how would one be disposed to envy the unbroken peacefulness that no ambitions ruffled, no rude disappointments disturbed! And yet such speculations as these are ever faulty, and wherever the human heart throbs, there, will be found its passions, its hopes, and fears. Beneath that quiet roof there dwelt all the elements that make the battle of life; and high aspirings and ignoble wishes, and love and fear, and jealousy, and wealth-seeking lived there, as though the spot were amidst the thundering crash of crowded streets, and the din of passing thousands!

Sybella Kellett had been domesticated there about two months, and between Lady Augusta and herself there had grown a sort of intimacy—short, indeed, of friendship, but in which each recognised good qualities in the other. Had Miss Kellett been

older, less good-looking, less graceful in manner, or generally less attractive, it is just possible, that—we say it with all doubt and deference—Lady Augusta might have been equally disposed to feel satisfied. She suspected “Mr. Dunn must have somewhat mistaken the object of her note,” or, “overlooked the requirements they sought for.” “Personal attractions were not amongst the essentials she had mentioned.” My “Lord,” too, was amazed at his recommending a “mere girl”—she couldn’t be more than “twenty”—and, consequently, “totally deficient in the class of knowledge he desired.”

Two months—no very long period—however, sufficed to show both father and daughter that they had been, to some extent, mistaken. Not only had she addressed herself to the task of an immense correspondence, but she had drawn out reports, arranged prospectuses, and entered into most complicated financial details with a degree of clearness that elicited marked compliment from the different bodies with whom this intercourse was maintained. The Glengariff Joint Stock Company, with its half million capital, figured largely in the public journals. Landscapes of the place appeared in the various illustrated papers, and cleverly-written magazine articles drew attention to a scheme that promised to make Ireland a favoured portion of the empire. Her interest once excited, Sybella Kellett’s zeal was untiring.

Already she anticipated the time when the population of that poor village—now barely subsisting in direst poverty—should become thriving and happy. The coast-fisheries—once a prolific source of wealth—were to be revived; fishing-craft, and tackle, and curing-houses, were all to be provided; means of transporting the proceeds to the rich markets of England procured. She had also discovered traces of lead in the neighbourhood, and Dunn was written to. to send down a competent person to investigate the matter. In fact, great as was her industry, it seemed only second to an intelligence that adapted itself to every fresh demand and every new exigency, without a moment’s interruption. To the old Lord, her resources appeared inexhaustible, and gradually he abandoned the lead and guidance he had formerly given to his plans, and submitted everything to her will and dictation. It did not, indeed, escape his shrewdness that her zeal was more warmly engaged by the philanthropy than by the profit of these projects. It was to the advancement of the people, the relief of their misery, the education of their children, the care of their sick, that she looked as the great reward of all that they proposed. “What a lesson we shall teach

the rest of Ireland if we 'succeed!'" was the constant exclamation she uttered. "How we shall be sought after to explain this and reveal that. What a proud day for us will it be when Glengariff shall be visited as the model school of the empire."

Thus fed and fostered by her hopes, her imagination knew no bounds, and the day seemed even too short for the duties it exacted. Even Lady Augusta could not avoid catching some of the enthusiasm that animated her, only restraining her expectations, however, by the cautious remark, "I wonder what Mr. Dunn will say? I am curious to know how he will pronounce upon it all."

The day at last came when this fact was to be ascertained, and the post brought the brief but interesting intelligence that Mr. Davenport Dunn would reach the Hermitage for dinner.

Lord Glengariff would have felt excessively offended could any one have supposed him anxious or uneasy on the score of Dunn's coming. That a great personage like himself should be compelled occasionally in life to descend to the agencies of such people was bad enough, but that he should have any misgivings about his co-operation or assistance, was really intolerable; and yet, we blush to confess, these were precisely the thoughts which troubled his Lordship throughout the whole of that long day.

"Not that Dunn has ever forgotten himself with *me*—not that he has ever shown himself unmindful of our respective stations—so much I must say," were the little scraps of consolation that he repeated over and over to himself, while grave doubts really oppressed him that we had fallen upon evil days, when men of that stamp usurped almost all the influence that swayed society. No easy matter was it either to resolve what precise manner to assume towards him. A cold and dignified bearing might possibly repel all confidence, and an easy familiarity be just as dangerous, as surrendering the one great superiority his position conferred. It was true his Lordship had never yet experienced any difficulty on such a score—of all men, he possessed a consummate sense of his own dignity, and suffered none to infringe it, but "this fellow Dunn had been spoiled." Great men—greater men than Lord Glengariff himself—had asked him to dinner. He had passed the thresholds of certain fine houses in Piccadilly, and well-powdered lacqueys in Park-lane had called "Mr. Dunn's carriage." Now the Irishman that has soared to the realm of whitebait with a Minister, or even a Star and Garter luncheon with a Secretary of State, becomes, to the eyes of his home-bred countrymen, a very different person from the celebrity

of mere Castle attentions and Phoenix Park civilities. Dunn was this, and more. He lounged into the Irish-office as into his own lodgings, and he walked into the most private chambers of Downing-street as if by right. Consulted or not, he had the reputation of holding the patronage of all Ireland in his hands; and, assuredly, they who attained promotion were not slow in testifying to what quarter they owed their gratitude. Some of that mysterious grandeur that clung to the old religions of the Greeks seems to hover round the acts of a great Government, till the Ministers, like Priests or Augurs, appear less equals and fellow-men than stewards and dispensers of immense bounties entrusted to their keeping. There was about Dunn's manner much to foster this illusion. He was a blending of mystery with the deepest humility, but with a very evident desire that you should neither believe one nor the other. It was the same conscious power looming through the affected modesty of his pretensions that offended Lord Glengariff, and made him irritable in all his intercourse with him.

Let us take a passing glance at Lady Augusta. And why, may we ask, has she taken such pains about her toilette to-day? Not that her dress is unusually rich or costly, but she has evidently made a study of the "becoming," and looks positively handsome. She remembered something of a fuchsia in her hair, long, long ago; and now, by mere caprice of course, she has interwoven one in those dark clusters, never glossier nor more silky. Her calm, cold features, too, have caught up a gentler expression, and her voice is softer and lower. Her maid can make nothing of it. Lady Augusta has been so gracious and so thoughtful, and asked about her poor old sick grandmother. Well, these sunlights are meant to show what the coldest landscapes may become when smiled on by brighter skies!

And Sybella. Pale and melancholy, and in mourning, she, too, has caught up a sense of pleasure at the coming visit, and a faint line of colour tinges her white cheek. She is very glad that Mr. Dunn is expected. "She has to thank him for many kindnesses; his prompt replies to her letters; his good-nature to poor Jack, for whom he has repeatedly written to the Horse Guards; not to speak of the words of encouragement and hope he has addressed to herself. Yes, he is, indeed, her friend; perhaps her only friend in the world."

And now they are met in the drawing-room, waiting with anxiety for some sounds that may denote the great man's coming. The three windows open to the ground; the rich sward, spangled

here and there with carnations or rich-scented stocks, slopes down towards a little river, from the bridge over which a view is caught of the Glengariff road, and to this spot each has silently loitered, and, as listlessly, turned back again without a word.

"We are waiting for Mr. Dunn, Augusta, ain't we?" asked Lord Glengariff, as if the thought had just suddenly struck him for the first time.

"Yes," replied she, gravely; "he promised us his company to-day at dinner."

"Are you quite sure it was to-day he mentioned?" said he, with an affected indifference in his tone.

"Miss Kellett can inform us with certainty."

"He said Thursday, and in time for dinner," said Sybella, not a little puzzled by this by-play of assumed forgetfulness.

"The man who makes his own appointments ought to keep them. I am five minutes beyond the half hour," said Lord Glengariff, as he looked at his watch.

"I suspect you are a little fast," observed Lady Augusta.

"There!—I think I heard the crack of a postilion's whip," cried Sybella, as she went outside the window to listen. Lady Augusta followed, and was soon at her side.

"You appear anxious for Mr. Dunn's coming. Is he a *very* intimate friend of yours, Miss Kellett?" said she, with a keen, quick glance of her dark eyes.

"He was the kind friend of my father, when he lived, and, since his death, he has shown himself not less mindful of me. There—I hear the horses plainly! Can't you hear them now, Lady Augusta?"

"And how was this kindness evidenced—in your own case I mean?" said Lady Augusta, not heeding her question.

"By advice, by counsel, by the generous interference which procured for me my present station here, not to speak of the spirit of his letters to me."

"So then you correspond with him?" asked she, reddening suddenly.

"Yes," said she, turning her eyes fully on the other. And thus they stood for some seconds, when, with a slight, but very slight motion of impatience, Lady Augusta said,

"I was not aware—I mean, I don't remember your having mentioned this circumstance to me."

"I should have done so if I thought it could have had any interest for you," said Sybella, calmly. "Oh, there is the carriage coming up the drive; I knew I was not mistaken."

Lady Augusta made no reply, but returned hastily to the house. Bella paused for a few seconds, and followed her.

No sooner was Mr. Dunn's carriage seen approaching the little bridge over the stream than Lord Glengariff rang to order dinner.

"It will be a rebuke he well merits," said he, "to find the soup on the table as he drives up."

There was something more than a mere movement of irritation in this; his Lordship regarded it as a fine stroke of policy, by which Dunn's arrival, tinged with constraint and awkwardness, should place that gentleman at a disadvantage during the time he stayed, Lord Glengariff's favourite theory being, that "these people were insufferable when at their ease."

Ah, my Lord, your memory was picturing the poor tutor of twenty years before, snubbed and scoffed at for his ungainly ways and ill-made garments—the man heavy in gait and awkward in address, sulky when forgotten, and shy when spoken to—this was the Davenport Dunn of your thoughts; there the very door *he* used to creep through in bashful confusion, yonder the side-table where he dined in a mockery of consideration. Little, indeed, were you prepared for him whose assured voice was already heard outside giving orders to his servant, and who now entered the drawing-room with all the ease of a man of the world.

"Ah, Dunn, most happy to see you here. No accident, I trust occurred to detain you," said Lord Glengariff, meeting him with a well-assumed cordiality, and then, not waiting for his reply, went on: "My daughter, Lady Augusta, an old acquaintance—if you have not forgotten her. Miss Kellett you are acquainted with."

Mr. Dunn bowed twice, and deeply, before Lady Augusta, and then, passing across the room, shook hands warmly with Sybella.

"How did you find the roads, Dunn?" asked his Lordship, still fishing about for some stray word of apology; "rather heavy, I fear, at this season."

"Capital roads, my Lord, and excellent horses. We came along at a rate which would have astonished the lumbering posts of the continent."

"Dinner, my Lord," said the butler, throwing wide the folding-doors.

"Will you give Lady Augusta your arm, Dunn?" said Lord Glengariff, as he offered his own to Miss Kellett.

"We have changed our dinner-room, Mr. Dunn," said Lady

Augusta, as they walked along; thus by a mere word suggesting "bygones and long ago."

"And with advantage, I should say," replied he, easily, as he surveyed the spacious and lofty apartment into which they had just entered. "The old dinner-room was low-ceilinged and gloomy."

"Do you really remember it?" asked she, with a pleasant smile.

"An over good memory has accompanied me through life, Lady Augusta," said he. And then, as he remarked the rising colour of her cheek, quickly added, "It is rarely that the faculty treats me to such grateful recollections as the present."

Lord Glengariff's table was a good specimen of country-house living. All the materials were excellent, and the cookery reasonably good; his wine ~~was~~ exquisite--the years and epochs connoisseurship loves to dwell upon; but Mr. Dunn ate sparingly and drank little. He had passed forty without gourmand tastes, and no man takes to epicurism after that. His Lordship beheld, not without secret dissatisfaction, his curdiest salmon declined, his wonderful "south-down" sent away scarcely tasted, and, horror of horrors! saw water mixed with his 1815 claret as if it were a "little Bordeaux wine" at a Swiss table d'hôte.

"Mr. Dunn has no appetite for our coarse country fare, Augusta," said Lord Glengariff; "you must take him over the cliffs, to-morrow, and let him feel the sharp Glengariff air. There's nothing but hunger for it."

"Pardon me, my Lord, if I say that I accept, with gratitude, the proposed remedy, though I can't acknowledge a just cause for it, I am always a poor eater."

"Tell him of Beverley, Augusta, tell him of Beverley," said my Lord.

"Oh, it was simply a case similar to your own," said she, hesitatingly, "and, in all probability, incurred in the same way. The Duke of Beverley, a very hard-worked man, as you know, always at Downing-street at ten, and never leaving it till night, came here two years ago, to pass a few weeks with us, and although hale and stout, to look at, could eat nothing--that is, he cared for nothing. It was in vain we put in requisition all our little culinary devices to tempt him; he sat down with us, and, like yourself, would fain persuade us that he dined, but he really touched nothing; and, in utter despair, I determined to try what a course of open air and exercise would do."

"She means eight hours a day hard walking, Dunn," chimed

in Lord Glengariff; "a good grouse-shooter's pace, too, and cross country."

"Well, confess that my remedy succeeded," said she, triumphantly."

"That it did. The Duke went back to town fifteen years younger. No one knew him; the Queen did not know him. And to this day he says, 'Whenever I'm hipped or out of sorts, I know what a resource I have in the Glengariff heather.'"

It is possible that Davenport Dunn listened with more of interest to this little incident because the hero of it was a Duke and a Cabinet Minister.

Assuredly the minor ills of life, the petty stomachic miseries, and such like, are borne with a more becoming patience when we know that they are shared by Peers and great folk. Not by *you*, valued reader, nor even by *me*—we have no such weaknesses—but by the Davenport Dunns of this world, one of whom we are now treating. It was pleasant, too, to feel that he not only had a Ducal ailment, but that he was to be cured like his Grace! And so he listened, eagerly, as Lady Augusta went on to tell of the various localities, strange and unpronounceable, that they used to visit; and how his Grace loved to row across such an arm of the lake; and what delight he took in the ascent of such a mountain. "But you shall judge for yourself, Mr. Dunn, said she, smiling, "and I now engage you for to-morrow, after breakfast." And with that she rose, and, accompanied by Sybella, passed into the drawing-room. Dunn was about to follow, when Lord Glengariff called out, "I'm of the old school, Dunn, and must have half an hour with my bottle before I join the ladies."

We do not stop to explain—perhaps we should not succeed to our wishes if we tried—why it was that Dunn was more genial, better satisfied, and more at his ease than when the dinner began, but so it was that as he filled the one glass of claret he meant to indulge in, he felt that he had been exaggerating to his own mind the disagreeables of this visit, and that everybody was kinder, pleasanter, and more natural than he had expected.

"Jesting apart, Dunn," said his Lordship, "Augusta is right. What you require is rest—perfect repose; never to read or write a letter for three weeks, not look at a newspaper, nor receive a telegraphic despatch. Let us try if Glengariff cannot set you up. The fact is, we can't spare you."

"Your opinion is too flattering by half, my Lord; but really, any one—I mean any one whose views are honest, and whose

intentions are upright—can complete the work I have begun. There is no secret—no mystery in it.”

“Come, come, this is over modest. We all know that your head alone could carry on the vast number of these great schemes which are now in operation amongst us. Could you really tell the exact number of companies of which you are Director?”

“I’m afraid to say that I could,” said Dunn, smiling.

“Of course you couldn’t. It is marvellous, downright marvellous, how you get through it. You rise early, of course?”

“Yes, my Lord, at five, summer and winter; light my own fire, and sit down to the desk till eight; by that time I have finished my correspondence on business topics. I then take a cup of tea and a little dry toast. This is my preparation for questions of politics, which usually occupy me till eleven. From that hour till three I receive deputations—heads of companies, and such like. I then take my ride, weather permitting, and usually contrive to call at the Lodge, till nigh dinner hour. If alone, my meal is a frugal one, and soon despatched; and then begins the real work of the day. A short nap of twenty minutes refreshes me, and I address myself with energy to my task. In these quiet hours, undisturbed and uninterrupted—for I admit none, not one, at such seasons—my mind is clear and unclouded, and I can work, without a sense of fatigue, till past midnight; it has even happened that morning has broke upon me without my being aware of it.”

“No health, no constitution, could stand that, Dunn,” said Lord Glengariff, with a voice artfully modulated to imply deep interest.

“Men are mere relays on the road of life; when one sinks, wearied or worn out, a fresh one comes forth ready to take his place in the traces.”

“That may be—that may be, in the mass of cases, but there are exceptional men, Dunn—men who—men in fact, whose faculties have such an adaptiveness to the age we live in—do you perceive my meaning?—men of the situation, as the French say.” Here his Lordship began to feel that he was getting upon very ticklish ground, and by no means sure how he was to get safely back again, when, with a violent plunge, he said, “That fellow Washington was one of those men, Louis Napoleon is another, and you—I don’t hesitate to say it—you are also an instance of what I mean.”

Dunn’s pale face flushed up as he muttered some broken words of depreciating meaning.

"The circumstances, I am aware, are different. You have not to revolutionise a country, but you have undertaken just as hard a task: to remodel its social state—to construct out of the ruined materials of a bankrupt people the elements of national wealth and greatness. Let no man tell me, Sir, that this is not a bolder effort than the other. Horse, foot, and dragoons, as poor Grattan used to say, won't aid you here. To your own clear head, and your own keen intellect, must you trust."

"My dear Lord," broke in Dunn, in a voice not devoid of emotion, "you exaggerate both my labour and my capacity. I saw that the holders of Irish property were not the owners, and I determined that they should be so. I saw that the people were improvident, less from choice than necessity, and I gave them banks. I saw land unproductive for want of capital, and I established the principal of loans for drainage and other improvements. I perceived that our soil and our climate favour certain species of cultivation, and as certainly deny some others. I popularised this knowledge."

"And you call this nothing! Why, Sir, where's the statesman can point to such a list of legislative acts? Peel himself has left no such legacy behind him."

"Ah, my Lord, this is too flattering—too flattering by half." And Dunn sipped his wine and looked down. "By the way, my Lord," said he, after a pause, "how has my recommendation in the person of Miss Kellett succeeded?"

"A very remarkable young woman—a singularly-gifted person indeed," said the old Lord, pompously. "Some of her ideas are tinctured, it is true, with that canting philanthropy we are just now infected with—that tendency to discover all the virtue in rags and all the vice in purple; but, with this abatement to her utility, I must say she possesses a very high order of mind. She comes of a good family, doesn't she?"

"None better. The Kelletts of Kellett's Court were equal to any gentry in this county."

"And left totally destitute?"

"A mere wreck of the property remains, and even that is so cumbered with claims and so involved in law, that I scarcely dare to say that they have an acre they can call their own."

"Poor girl. A hard case—a very hard case. We like her much, Dunn. My daughter finds her very companionable; her services, in a business point of view, are inestimable. All those reports you have seen are hers, all those drawings made by her hand."

"I am aware, my Lord, how much zeal and intelligence she has displayed," said Dunn, who had no desire to let the conversation glide into the great Glengariff scheme, "and I am also aware how gratefully she feels the kindness she has met with under this roof."

"That is as it should be, Dunn, and I am rejoiced to hear it. It is in no spirit of self-praise I say it, but in simple justice—we do—my daughter and myself, both of us—do endeavour to make her feel that her position is less that of dependent than—than—companion."

"I should have expected nothing less from your Lordship nor Lady Augusta," said Dunn, gravely.

"Yes, yes; you knew Augusta formerly; you can appreciate her high-minded and generous character, though I think she was a mere child when you saw her first."

"Very young indeed, my Lord," said Dunn, colouring faintly.

"She is exactly, however, what she then promised to be—an Arden, a genuine Arden, Sir; no deceit, no double; frank, outspoken; too much so, perhaps, for our age of mock courtesy, but a noble-hearted girl, and one fit to adorn any station."

There was an honest, earnest sincerity in the old Lord's manner that made Dunn listen with respect to the sentiments he uttered, though in his heart the epithet girl, as applied to Lady Augusta, seemed somewhat ill chosen.

"I see you take no wine, so that, if you have no objection, we'll join the ladies."

"Your Lordship was good enough to tell me that I was to make myself perfectly at home here; may I begin at once to avail myself of your kindness, and say that for this evening I beg to retire early? I have a number of letters to read, and some to answer."

"Really, Lady Augusta will feel quite offended if you slight her tea-table."

"Nay, my Lord. It is only for this evening, and I am sure you will make my excuses becomingly."

"It shall be as you please," said the old Lord, with a rather stiff courtesy.

"Thank you, my Lord; thank you. I assure you it is very rarely the sacrifice to duty costs me so keenly. Good night."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"A MAN IN REQUEST."

THE bountifully-spread breakfast-table of the following morning was not destined to be graced by Mr. Dunn's presence. A clerk had arrived early in the morning with a mass of correspondence from Dublin, and a Government messenger armed with an ominous-looking red box, came post haste about an hour later, while a request for a cup of tea in his own room explained that Mr. Dunn was not to make his appearance in public.

"This savours of downright slavery," said Lady Augusta, whose morning toilette was admirably devised.

"To me it savours of downright humbug," said Lord Glengariff, pettishly. "No one shall tell me that a man has not time to eat his meals like a gentleman. A Secretary of State doesn't give himself such airs. Why, I protest, here comes another courier! what can this fellow be?"

"A messenger from the Home-office has just arrived for Mr. Dunn," said Miss Kellett, entering the room.

"Our little cottage is become like a house in Whitehall-gardens," said Lord Glengariff, angrily. "I have no doubt we ought to feel excessively flattered by the notoriety the newspapers are certain to accord us."

"Mr. Dunn is more to be pitied than any of us," said Lady Augusta, compassionately.

"I suspect he'd not agree with you," said his Lordship, bitterly. "I rather opine that Mr. Dunn has another and a very different estimate of his present position."

"Such a life is certainly not enviable. Perhaps I'm wrong, though," said she quickly; "Miss Kellett does not seem of *my* mind."

Sybella blushed slightly, and, in some embarrassment, said, "Certain minds find their best happiness in great labour; Mr. Dunn's may be one of these."

"Pulteney found time for a cast with the hounds, and Charles Fox had leisure for his rubber of whist. It is these modern fellows have introduced the notion that 'the House' is like a 'mill at Manchester.' There goes one with his despatches," cried he, as a mounted messenger rode off from the door. "I'd wager a trifle that if they never came to hand the world would just jog on its course as pleasantly, and no one the worse for the mishap."

"With Mr. Dunn's compliments, my Lord," said a servant, placing several open letters on the table; "he thought your Lordship would like to see the latest news from the Crimea."

While Lord Glengariff took out his spectacles his face grew crimson, and he seemed barely able to restrain a burst of passionate indignation. As the servant closed the door he could no longer contain himself, but broke out: "Just fancy their sending off these despatches to this fellow Dunn. Here am I, an Irish Peer, of as good blood and ancient family as any in my country, and I might as well expect to hear Buckingham Palace was fitted up for my town residence when next I went to London, as look for an attention of this sort. If I hadn't it here under my own eyes, and saw the address, 'Davenport Dunn, Esq.,' 'on her Majesty's service,' I'd say flatly it was impossible."

"May I read some of them?" asked Lady Augusta, wishing by any means to arrest this torrent of angry attack.

"Yes, read away," cried he, laying down his spectacles. "Miss Kellett, too, may indulge her curiosity, if she has any, about the war."

"I have a dearer interest at stake there," said Sybella, blushing.

"I see little here we have not already read in the *Times*," said Lady Augusta, perusing the paper before her. "The old story of rifle-pits, sorties against working parties, the severity of the duty, and the badness of the commissariat."

"This is interesting," broke in Sybella. "It is an extract from a private letter of some one high in command. It says: 'The discontent of our Allies increases every day, and as every post from France only repeats how unpopular the war is in that country, I foresee that nothing short of some great *fait d'armes*, in which the French shall have all the glory, will induce the Imperial Government to continue the struggle. The satisfaction felt in France at the attacks of the English journals on our own

army, its generalship, and its organisation, are already wearing out, and they look now for some higher stimulant to the national vanity."

"Who writes this?" cried Lord Glengariff, eagerly.

"The name is not given," said she. "The despatch goes on merely to say, 'Your Lordship would do well to give these words the consideration they seem to deserve.' But here again, 'the coolness of the Marshal increases, and our intercourse is neither frank nor confidential.'"

"All this sounds badly," said Lord Glengariff. "Our only progress would seem to be in ill-will with our ally. I suppose the end of it will be, we shall be left to continue the struggle alone."

"Would that it were so," burst in Sybella. "A great orator said t'other day in the House, that coalitions were fatal—Englishmen never liked them. He only spoke of those alliances where parties agree to merge their differences and unite for some common object; but far more perilous are the coalitions where nations combine, the very contest that they wage being a field to evoke ancient rivalries and smouldering jealousies. I'd rather see our little army alone, with its face to the foe and its back to the sea, than I'd read of our entrance into Sebastopol side by side with the legions of France."

The passionate enthusiasm of the moment had carried her away, and she grew pale and heart-sick at her unwonted boldness as she finished.

"I hope Mr. Dunn may be able to benefit by your opinions on strategy," said Lady Augusta, as she rose from the table.

"What was it Lady Augusta said?" cried Lord Glengariff, as she left the room.

"I scarcely heard her aright, my Lord," said Sybella, whose face was now crimson.

It was the first moment in her life in which dependence had exposed her to insult, and she could not collect her faculties, or know what to do.

"These things," said Lord Glengariff, pushing the despatches contemptuously away, "add nothing to our knowledge. That writer in the *Times* gives us everything we want to know, and gives it better too. Send them back to Dunn, and ascertain, if you can, when we are likely to see him. I want him to come down to the bay; he ought to see the harbour and the coast. Manage this, Miss Kellett—not from *me*, of course, but in *your* own way—and let me know."

Lord Glengariff now left the room, and Sybella was once more deep in the despatches.

Dry and guarded as they were—formal, with all the stamp of official accuracy—they yet told of the greatest and grandest struggle of our age. It was a true war of Titans, with the whole world for spectators. The splendid heroism of our army seemed even eclipsed by the unbroken endurance of daily hardship—that stern and uncomplaining courage that faced death in cold blood, and marched to the fatal trenches with the steadfast tramp of a forlorn hope.

“No conscript soldiers ever bore themselves thus,” cried she, in ecstasy. “These are the traits of personal gallantry—not the disciplined bravery that comes of the serried file and the roll of the drum.”

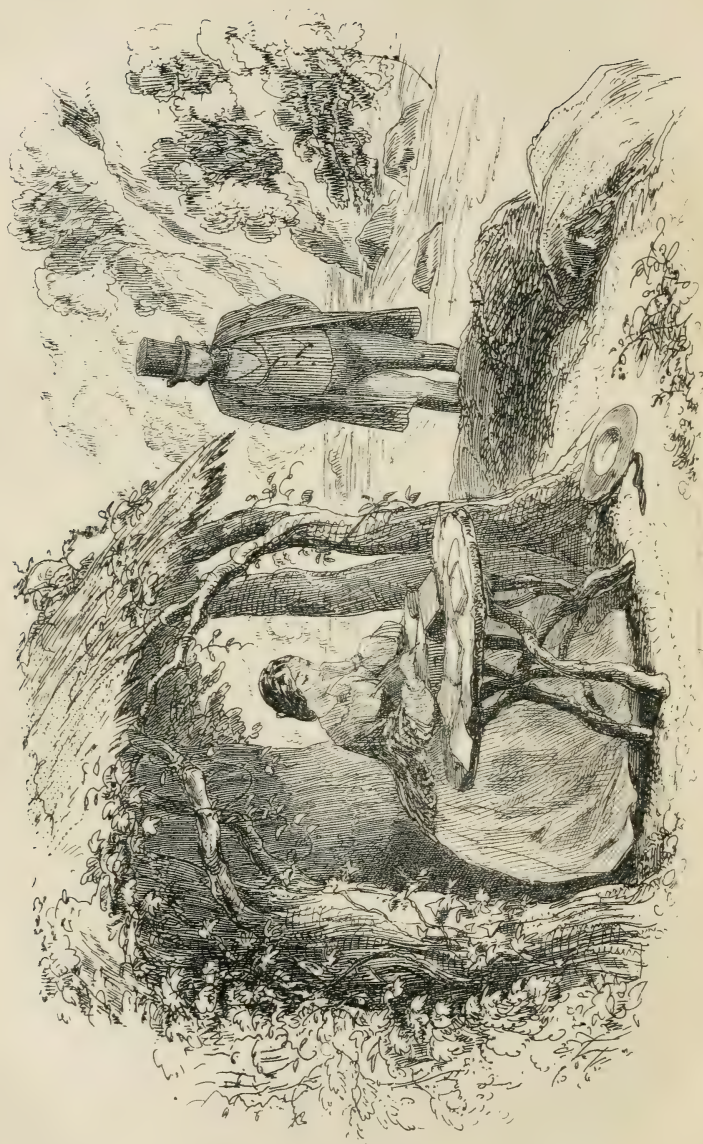
With all her anxieties for his fate, she gloried to think “dear Jack” was there—that he was bearing his share of their hardships, and reaping his share of their glory. And oh! if she could but read mention of his name—if she could hear of him quoted for some act of gallantry, or, better still, some trait of humanity and kindness—that he had rescued a wounded comrade, or succoured some poor maimed and forlorn enemy!

How hard was it for her on that morning, full of these themes, to address herself to the daily routine of her work. The grand panorama of war continued to unroll itself before her eyes, and the splendid spectacle of the contending armies revealed itself like a picture before her. The wondrous achievements she had read of reminded her of those old histories which had been the delight of her childhood, and she gloried to think that the English race was the same in daring and chivalry as it had shown itself centuries back!

She tried hard to persuade herself that the peaceful triumphs of art, the great discoveries of science, were finer and grander developments of human nature; but with all her ingenuity they seemed inglorious and poor beside the splendid displays of heroism.

“And now to my task,” said she, with a sigh, as she folded up the map of the Crimea, on which she was tracing the events of the war.

Her work of that morning was the completion of a little “Memoir” of Glengariff and its vicinity, written in that easy and popular style which finds acceptance in our periodicals, and meant to draw attention to the great scheme for whose accomplishment a company was to be formed. Lord Glengariff wished



this sketch should be completed while Dunn was still there, so that it might be shown him, and his opinion be obtained upon it.

Never had her task seemed so difficult—never so uncongenial; and though she laboured hard to summon up all her former interest in the great enterprise, her thoughts would stray away, in spite of her, to the indented shores of the Crimea, and the wild and swelling plains around Sebastopol. Determined to see if change of place might not effect some change of thought, she carried her papers to a little summer-house on the river-side, and once more addressed herself, resolutely, to her work. With an energy that rarely failed her, she soon overcame the little distraction, and wrote away rapidly and with ease. She at last reached that stage in her essay where, having enumerated all the advantages of the locality, she desired to show how nothing was wanting to complete its celebrity and recognition but the touch of some of those great financial magicians whose great privilege it is to develop the wealth and augment the resources of their fellow-men. She dwelt earnestly and, indeed, eloquently on the beauty of the scenery. She knew it in every varying aspect of its colouring, and she lingered over a description of which the reality had so often captivated her. Still, even here, the fostering hand of taste might yet contribute much. The stone pine and the ilex would blend favourably with the lighter foliage of the ash and the hazel, and many a fine point of view was still all but inaccessible for want of a footpath. How beautifully, too, would the tasteful cottage of some true lover of the picturesque peep from amidst the evergreen oaks that grew down to the very shore. While she wrote, a shadow fell over her paper. She looked up, and saw Mr. Dunn. He had strolled by accident to the spot, and entered unperceived by her.

"What a charming place you have chosen for your study, Miss Kellett," said he, seating himself at the table. "Not but I believe," continued he, "that when once deeply engaged in a pursuit, one takes little account of surrounding objects. Pastorals have been composed in garrets, and our greatest romancer wrote some of his most thrilling scenes amid the noise and common-place interruptions of a Court of Sessions."

"Such labours as mine," said she, smiling, "neither require nor deserve the benefit of a chosen spot."

"You are engaged upon Glengariff," said he; "am I at liberty to look?" And he took the paper from the table as he spoke. At first he glanced half carelessly at the lines, but as he read on

he became more attentive, and at last, turning to the opening pages, he read with marked earnestness and care.

"You have done this very well—admirably well," said he, as he laid it down; "but shall I be forgiven if I make an ungracious speech?"

"Say on," said she, smiling good-naturedly.

"Well, then," said he, drawing a long breath, "you are pleading an impossible cause. They who suggested it were moved by the success of those great enterprises which every day develops around us, and which, by the magic word 'Company,' assume vitality and consistence; they speculated on immense profits just as they could compute a problem in arithmetic. It demanded so much skill and no more. *You*—I have no need that you should tell me so—were actuated by very different motives. You wanted to benefit a poor and neglected peasantry, to disseminate amongst them the blessings of comfort and civilisation; *you* were eager for the philanthropy of the project, *they* for its gain."

"But why, as a mere speculation, should it be a failure?" broke she in.

"There are too many reasons for such a result," said he, with a melancholy smile. "Suffice it if I give you only one. We Irish are not in favour just now. While we were troublesome and rebellious, there was an interest attached to us—we were dangerous; and even in the sarcasms of the English press there lurked a secret terror of some great convulsion here which should shake the entire empire. We are prosperous now, and no longer picturesque. Our better fortune has robbed us of the two claims we used to have on English sympathy; we are neither droll nor ragged, and so they can neither laugh at our humour nor sneer at our wretchedness. Will not these things show you that we are not likely to be fashionable? I say this to you; to Lord Glengarriff I will speak another language. I will tell him that his scheme will not attract speculators. I myself cannot advocate it. I never link my name with defeats. He will be, of course, indignant, and we shall part on bad terms. He is not the first I have refused to make rich."

There was a tone of haughty assumption in the way he spoke these words that astonished Sybella, who gazed at him without speaking.

"Are you happy here?" asked he, abruptly.

"Yes—that is, I have been so up to this——"

"In short, until I had robbed you of an illusion," said he,

interrupting her. "Ah! how many a pang do these 'awakenings' cost us in life!" muttered he, half to himself. "Every one has his ambitions of one sort or other, and fancies his goal the true one; but his faith once disturbed, how hard it is to address himself earnestly to another creed!"

"If it be duty," broke she in, "and if we have the consciousness of an honest breast and a right intention——"

"That is to say, if we gain a verdict in the court where we ourselves sit as judge," said he, with a suddenness that surprised her. "I, for instance, have my own sense of what is right and just, am I quite sure it is *yours*? I see certain anomalies in our social condition, great hardships, heavy wrongs; if I address myself to correct them, am I so certain that others will concur with me? The battle of life, like every other conflict, is one in which to sustain the true cause one must do many a cruel thing. It is only at last, when success has crowned all your efforts, that the world condescends to say you have done well."

"You of all men, can afford to await this judgment patiently."

"Why do you say that of *me*?" asked he, eagerly.

"Because, so long as I can remember, I have seen your name associated with objects of charity and benevolence; and not these alone, but with every great enterprise that might stimulate the efforts and develop the resources of the country."

"Some might say that personal objects alone influenced me," said he, in a low voice.

"How poor and narrow-minded would be such a judgment," replied she, warmly. "There is an earnestness in high purpose no self-seeking could ever counterfeit."

"That is true—quite true," said he; but are you so certain that the world makes the distinction? Does not the vulgar estimate confound the philanthropist with the speculator? I say this with sorrow," said he, painfully, "for I myself am the victim of this very injustice." He paused for a few seconds, and then rising, he said, "Let us stroll along the river-side; we have both worked enough for the day." She arose at once, and followed him. "It is ever an ungracious theme—oneself," said he, as they walked along; "but, somehow, I am compelled to talk to you, and, if you will allow me, confidentially," He did not wait for a reply, but went on: "There was, in the time of the French Regency, a man named Law, who, by dint of deep study and much labour, arrived at the discovery of a great financial scheme, so vast, so comprehensive, and so complete was it, that not only was it able to rescue the condition of the State from

bankruptcy, but it disseminated through the trading classes of the nation the sound principles of credit on which alone commerce can be based. Now this man—a man of unquestionable genius and—if benefits to one's species gave a just title to the name—a philanthropist—lived to see the great discovery he had made prostituted to the basest arts of scheming speculators. From the Prince, who was his patron, to the humblest agent of the Bourse, he met nothing but duplicity, falsehood, and treachery, and he ended in being driven in shame and ignominy from the land he had succeeded in rescuing from impending ruin! You will say that the people and the age explain much of this base ingratitude, but believe me, nations and eras are wonderfully alike. The good and evil of this world go on repeating themselves in cycles with a marvellous regularity. The fate which befel Law may overtake any who will endeavour to imitate him; there is but one condition which can avert this catastrophe, and that is success. Law had too long deferred to provide for his own security. Too much occupied with his grand problem, he had made himself neither rich nor great, so that when the hour of adversity came no barriers of wealth or power stood between him and his enemies. Had he foreseen this catastrophe—had he anticipated it—he might have so dovetailed his own interests with those of the State, that attack upon one involved the fate of the other. But Law did nothing of the kind; he made friends of Princes, and with the fortune that attaches to such friendships, he fell!" For some minutes he walked along at her side without speaking, and then resumed: "With all these facts before me, I, too, see that Law's fate may be my own!"

"But have you——" When she had gone thus far, Sybella stopped and blushed deeply, unable to continue.

"Yes," said he, answering what might have been her words—"yes, it was my ambition to have been to Ireland what Law was to France—not what calumny and injustice have pictured him, remember, but the great reformer, the great financier, the great philanthropist—to make this faction-torn land a great and united nation. To develop the resources of the richest country in Europe was no mean ambition, and he who even aspired to it was worthy of a better recompense than attack and insult."

"I have seen none of these," broke she in. "Indeed, so long as I remember, I can call to mind only eulogies of your zeal, praises of your intelligence, and the grandeur of your designs."

"There are such, however," said he, gloomily; "they are the first low murmurings, too, of a storm that will come in full force

hereafter! Let it come," muttered he, below his breath. "If I am to fall, it shall be like Samson, and the temple shall fall with me."

Sybella did not catch his words, but the look of his features as he spoke them made her almost shudder with terror.

"Let us turn back," said she; "it is growing late."

Without speaking, Dunn turned his steps towards the cottage, and walked along in deep thought.

"Mr. Hanks has come, Sir," said Dunn's servant, as he reached the door. And without even a word, Dunn hastened to his own room.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

MR. DAVENPORT DUNN IN MORE MOODS THAN ONE.

ALTHOUGH Mr. Hankes performs no very conspicuous part in our story, he makes his appearance at the Hermitage with a degree of pomp and circumstance which demand mention. With our reader's kind leave, therefore, we mean to devote a very brief chapter to that gentleman and his visit.

As in great theatres there is a class of persons to whose peculiar skill and ability are confided all the details of "spectacle," all those grand effects of panoramic splendour which in a measure make the action of the drama subordinate to the charms of what, more properly, ought to be mere accessories, so modern speculation has called to its aid its own special machinists and decorators—a gifted order of men, capable of surrounding the driest and least promising of enterprises with all the pictorial attractions and attractive graces of the "ballet."

If it be a question of a harbour or dock company, the prospectus is headed with a coloured print, wherein tall three-deckers mingle with close-reefed cutters, their gay buntings fluttering in the breeze as the light waves dance around the bows; from the sea beneath to the clouds above all is motion and activity—meet emblems of the busy shore where commerce lives and thrives. If it be a building speculation, the architecture is but the background of a brilliant "mall," where splendid equipages and caracolling riders figure, with gay parasols and sleek poodles intermixed.

One "buys in" to these stocks with feelings far above "five per cent." A sense of the happiness diffused amongst thousands of our fellow-creatures—the "blessings of civilisation," as we like to call the extension of cotton prints—cheer and animate

us; and while laying out our money advantageously, we are crediting our hearts with a large balance on the score of philanthropy. To foster this commendable tendency, to feed the tastes of those who love, so to say, to "shoot at Fortune with both barrels," an order of men arose, cunning in all the devices of advertisement, learned in the skill of capitals, and adroit in illustrations.

Of these was Mr. Hanks. Originally brought up at the feet of George Robins, he was imported into Ireland by Mr. Davenport Dunn as his chief man of business—the Grand Vizier of Joint Stock Companies and all industrial speculations.

If Doctor Pangloss was a good man for knowing what wickedness was," Mr. Hanks might equally pretend to skill in all enterprises, since he had experienced for a number of years every species of failure and defeat. The description of his residences would fill half a column of a newspaper. They ranged from Brompton to Boulogne, and took in everything from Wilton-crescent to St. John's Wood. He had done a little of everything, too, from "Chief Commissioner to the Isthmus"—we never heard of what isthmus—to Parliamentary Agent for the friends of Jewish emancipation. With a quickness that rarely deceived him, Dunn saw his capabilities. He regarded him as fighting fortune so bravely with all the odds against him, that he ventured to calculate what such a man might be, if favourably placed in the world. The fellow who could bring down his bird with a battered old flint musket might reasonably enough distinguish himself if armed with an Enfield rifle. The venture was not, however, entirely successful; for though Hanks proved himself a very clever fellow, he was only really great under difficulties. It was with the crash of falling fortunes around him—amidst debt, bankruptcy, executions, writs, and arrests—Hanks rose above his fellows, and displayed all the varied resources of his fertile genius. The Spartan vigour of his mind assorted but badly with prosperity, and Hanks waxed fat and indolent, affected gorgeous waistcoats and chains, and imperceptibly sank down to the level of those decorative arts we have just alluded to. The change was curious: it was as though Gérard or Gordon Cumming should have given up lion-hunting and taken to teach piping bullfinches!

Every venture of Davenport Dunn was prosperous. All his argosies were borne on favouring winds, and Hanks saw his great defensive armour hung up to rust and to rot. Driven in some measure, therefore, to cut out his path in life, he invented

that grand and gorgeous school of enterprise whose rashness and splendour crush into insignificance all the puny attempts of common-place speculators. He only talked millions—thousands he ignored. He would accept of no names on the direction of his schemes save the very highest in rank. If he crossed the Channel, his haste required a special steamer. If he went by rail, a special train awaited him. The ordinary world, moving along at its tortoise pace, was shocked at the meteor course that every now and then shot across the hemisphere, and felt humiliated in their own hearts by the comparison.

Four smoking posters, harnessed to the neatest and lightest of travelling carriages, had just deposited Mr. Hanks at the Hermitage, and he now sat in Mr. Dunn's dressing-room, arranging papers and assorting documents in preparation for his arrival.

It was easy to perceive that as Dunn entered the room he was very far from feeling pleased at his lieutenant's presence there.

"What was there so very pressing, Mr. Hanks," said he, "that could not have awaited my return to town?"

"A stormy meeting of the Lough Allen Tin Company yesterday, Sir—a very stormy meeting indeed. Shares down to twenty-seven and an eighth—unfavourable report on the ore, and a rumour—mere rumour, of course—that the last dividend was paid out of capital."

"Who says this?" asked Dunn, angrily.

"The *True Blue*, Sir, hinted as much in the evening edition, and the suggestion was at once caught up by the Tory press."

"Macken—isn't that the man's name—edits the *True Blue*?"

"Yes, Sir; Michael Macken."

"What have we against *him*, Hanks? If my memory deceives me not, we have something. Oh, I remember! he's the fellow of the forged stamps. I suppressed the charge at the Stamp-office, but I have all the papers to substantiate it. See him—don't write, Hanks, see him—and show him how he stands. Let the article be fully contradicted, and an apology inserted."

Mr. Hanks made a memorandum in his note-book, and went on: "Fenwick—Sir William Fenwick—retires from the Munster Bank Direction, and threatens a public letter with his reasons."

"I know them; he has obtained the loan he looked for, and wants to dissolve the connexion now, but we don't so readily

part with dear friends! See him also, Hanks, and say that a certain play transaction at Malta would figure awkwardly in any controversy between us, and that I know the man who took up the card from the floor."

"This will be open war, won't it?" asked Hanks.

"No; it will be the foundation of a friendship for life," said Dunn, smiling.

"Captain Palmer—that's a bad business, that of Palmer," said Hanks, shaking his head. "He came to the office in a towering passion yesterday, and it was all I could do to prevent him breaking out before the clerks. He said that when he gave up the stipendiary magistrateship, he had a distinct promise of a Consulate in France, and now he is gazetted Coast Commissioner at the Niger, where nobody was ever known to survive the first autumn."

"Tell him he need not go out till spring; that will give us six months to promote him, either in this world or the next. The man is of no consequence, any how."

"Colonel Masham refuses to ratify the sale of Kilbeacon."

"Why so—on what pretext?" asked Dunn, angrily.

"He says you promised to support his canvass for Loughrea, and that your agents are secretly doing all in their power to defeat him; that no later than last Sunday, Father Walsh——"

"There—there," broke in Dunn, impatiently; "you don't suppose that I have time or patience to throw away on these histories."

"What answer shall I give him, then?" asked Hanks.

"Tell him—explain to him that the exigencies of party—— No, that won't do. Send down Harte to conduct his election, let him be returned for the borough, and tell Joe Harte to take care to provide a case that will unseat him on a petition; before the petition comes on, we shall have the sale completed. The Colonel shall be taught that our tactics are somewhat sharper than his own."

Hanks smiled approvingly at this stratagem of his chief, and really for the moment felt proud of serving such a leader. Once more, however, did he turn to his dreary note-book and its inexorable bead-roll of difficulties; but Dunn no longer heard him, for he was deep in his private correspondence, tearing open and reading letter after letter with impatient haste. "What of the Crimea—what did you say, there?" cried Dunn, stopping suddenly, and catching at the sound of ~~that~~ one word.

"That report of the *Morning Post* would require a prompt contradiction."

"What report?" asked Dunn, quickly.

"Here's the paragraph." And the other read from a newspaper before him: "'Our readers, we feel assured, will learn with satisfaction that the Government is at this moment in negotiation for the services of Mr. Davenport Dunn in the Crimea. To any one who has followed the sad story of our Commissariat blunders and short-comings, the employment of this—the first administrative mind of our day—will be matter for just gratification. We have only to turn our eyes to the sister country, and see what success has attended his great exertions there, to anticipate what will follow his labours in the still more rugged field of the Crimea.'"

"This is from the *Examiner*: 'We are sorry to hear, and upon the authority that assumes to be indisputable, that a grave difficulty has suspended, for the time at least, the negotiation between the Government and Mr. Davenport Dunn. The in-sistance on the part of that gentleman of such a recognition for his services as no Administration could dare to promise, being the obstacle.'"

"*Punch* has also his say: 'Mr. Davenport Dunn's scheme is now before the Cabinet. It resolves itself into this: The Anglo-French alliance to be conducted on the principles of a Limited Liability Company. For preference shares, address Count Morny, in Paris, or Dowb, at Balaklava.'"

"So much for official secrecy and discretion. This morning brings me the offer from the Minister of this appointment, and here is the whole press of England speculating, criticising, and ridiculing it, forty-eight hours before the proposal is made me! What says the great leading journal?" added he, opening a broad sheet before him. "Very brief, and very vague," muttered he. "'No one knows better than the accomplished individual alluded to, how little the highest honours in the power of the Crown to bestow could add to the efficiency of that zeal, or the purpose of that guidance he has so strenuously and successfully devoted to the advancement of his country.' Psha!" cried he, angrily, as he threw down the paper, and walked to the window.

Hankes proceeded to read aloud one of those glowing panegyrics certain popular journals loved to indulge in, on the superior virtue, capacity, and attainments of the middle classes. "Of these," said the writer. "Mr. Dunn is a good specimen.

Sprung from what may be called the very humblest rank——”

“Who writes that? What paper is it?”

“The *Daily Tidings*.”

“You affect to know all these fellows of the press. It is your pride to have been their associate and boon companion. I charge you, then, no matter for the means or the cost, get that man discharged; follow him up, too; have an eye upon him wherever he goes, and wherever he obtains employment. He shall learn that a hungry stomach is a sorry recompense for the pleasure of pointing a paragraph. Let me see that you make a note of this, Mr. Hanks, and that you execute it also.”

It was something so new for Hanks to see Dunn manifest any, the slightest, emotion on the score of the press, whether its comments took the shape of praise or blame, that he actually stared at him with a sort of incredulous astonishment.

“If I were born a Frenchman, an Italian, or even a German,” said Dunn, with a savage energy of voice, “should I be taunted in the midst of my labours that my origin was plebian? would the society in which I move be reminded that they accept me on sufferance? would the cheer that greeted my success be mingled with the cry, ‘Remember whence you came?’ I tell you, Sir”—and here he spoke with the thickened utterance of intense passion—“I tell you, Sir, that with all the boasted liberty of our institutions, we cultivate a social slavery in these islands, to which the life of a negro is freedom in comparison!”

A sharp tap at the door interrupted him, and he cried “Come in.” It was a servant to say dinner was on the table, and his Lordship was waiting.

“Please to say I am indisposed—a severe headache. I hope his Lordship will excuse my not appearing to-day,” said he, with evident confusion; and then, when the servant withdrew, added, “You may go down to the inn. I suppose there is one in the village. I shall want horses to-morrow, and relays ready on the road to Killarney. Give the orders, and if anything else occurs to my recollection, I’ll send you word in the evening.”

Whether it was that Mr. Hanks had been speculating on the possible chances of dining with “my Lord” himself, or that the prospect of the inn at Glengariff was little to his taste, but he assuredly gathered up his papers in a mood that indicated no peculiar satisfaction, and withdrew without a word.

A second message now came to inquire what Mr. Dunn would like to take for his dinner, and conveying Lord Glengariff’s regrets for his indisposition.

"A little soup—some fish, if there be any—nothing else," said Dunn, while he opened his writing desk and prepared for work. Not noticing the interruption of the servant as he laid the table, he wrote away rapidly; at last he arose, and having eaten a few mouthfuls, resealed himself at his desk. His letter was to the Minister, in answer to the offer of that morning's post. There was a degree of dexterity in the way that he conveyed his refusal, accompanying it by certain suggestive hints, vague and shadowy of course, of what the services of such a man as himself might possibly accomplish, so as to indicate how great was the loss to the State by not being fortunate enough to secure such high acquirements. The whole wound up with a half ambiguous regret that, while the Ministry should accept newspaper dictation for their appointments, they could not also perceive that popular will should be consulted in the rewards extended to those who deserted their private and personal objects to devote their energies to the cause of the empire.

"Whenever such a Government shall arise," wrote he, "the Ministry will find few refusals to the offers of employment, and men will alike consult their patriotism and their self-esteem in taking office under the Crown; nor will there be found, in the record of replies to a Ministerial proffer, one such letter as now bears the signature of your Lordship's

"Very devoted, and very obedient servant,

"DAVENPORT DUNN."

This history does not profess to say how Mr. Dunn's apology was received by his noble host. Perhaps, however, we are not unwarranted in supposing that Lord Glengariff's temper was sorely and severely tested; one thing is certain, the dinner passed off with scarcely a word uttered at the table, and a perfect stillness prevailed throughout the cottage.

After some hours of hard labour, Dunn opened his window to enjoy the fresh air of the night, tempered slightly as it was with a gentle sea breeze. If our western moonlights have not the silver lustre of Greece, of which old Homer himself sings, they have, in compensation, a mellow radiance of wondrous softness and beauty. Objects are less sharply defined and picked out, it is true, but the picture gains in warmth of colour, and those blended effects where light and shadow alternate. The influences of Nature—the calm, still moonlight—the measured march of the long, sweeping waves upon the strand—those

brilliant stars, "so still above, so restless in the water"—have a marvellous power over the hard-worked men of the world. They are amidst the few appeals to the heart which they can neither spurn nor reject.

Half hidden by the trees, but still visible from where he sat, Dunn could mark the little window of his humble bedroom twenty years ago! Ay! there was the little den to which he crept at night, his heart full of many a sorrow; the "proud man's contumely" had eaten deep into him, and each day brought some new grievance, some new trial to be endured, while the sight of her he loved—the young and haughty girl—goaded him almost to madness.

One after another came all the little incidents of that long-forgotten time crowding to his memory, and now he bethought him how noiselessly he used to glide down those stairs, and stealing into the wood, meet her in her morning's walk, and how, as with uncovered head, he bowed to her, she would bestow upon him one of her own half saucy smiles—more mockery than kindness. He called to mind the day, too, he had climbed the mountain to gather a bouquet of the purple heath—she said she liked it—and how, after a great effort of courage, he ventured to offer it to her. She took it half laughingly from his hand, and then turning to her pet goat beside her, gave it him to eat. He could have shot himself that morning, and yet there he was now, to smile over the incident!

As he sat, the sounds of music floated up from the open window of the room beneath. It was the piano, the same he used to hear long ago, when the Poet himself of the Melodies came down to pass a few days at the Hermitage. A low, soft voice was now singing, and as he bent down he could hear the words of poor Griffin's beautiful song:

"A place in thy memory, dearest,
Is all that I claim;
To pause and look back as thou hearest
The sound of my name."

What a strange thrill did the words send through him! They came, as it were, to fill up the whole story of the past, embodying the unspoken prayer his love-sick heart once was filled with. For that "smile and kind word when we meet," had he once pined and longed, and where was the spirit now that had once so yearned for love? A cold shudder passed over him, and he felt ill. He sat for a long while so deep in reflection, that

he did not notice the music had ceased, and now all was still and silent around. From the balcony outside his window a little winding stair led down to the lawn beneath, and down this he now took his way, resolving to stroll for half an hour or so before bedtime.

Walking carelessly along, he at last found himself on the banks of the river, close to the spot where he had met Miss Kellett that same morning. How glad he would have been to find her there again! That long morning's ramble had filled him with many a hopeful thought—he knew, with the instinct that in such men as himself rarely deceives—that he had inspired her with a sort of interest in him, and it warmed his self-esteem to think that he could be valued for something besides “success.” The flutter of a white dress crossing the little rustic bridge caught his eye at this moment, and he hurried along the path. He soon gained sufficiently upon the retiring figure to see it was a lady. She was strolling quietly along, stopping at times to catch the effects of the moonlight on the landscape.

Dunn walked so as to make his footsteps heard approaching, and she turned suddenly and exclaimed, “Oh, Mr. Dunn, who would have thought to see you here?”

“A question I might almost have the hardihood to retort, Lady Augusta,” said he, completely taken by surprise.

“As for me,” said she, carelessly, “it is my usual walk every evening. I stroll down to the shore round by that rocky headland, and rarely return before midnight; but *you*,” added she, throwing a livelier interest into her tone, “they said you were poorly, and so overwhelmed with business it was hopeless to expect to see you.”

“Work follows such men as myself like a destiny,” said he, sighing; “and as the gambler goes on to wager stake after stake on fortune, so do we hazard leisure, taste, happiness, all, to gain—I know not what in the end.”

“Your simile points to the losing gamester,” said she, quickly; “but he who has won, and won largely, may surely quit the table when he pleases.”

“It is true,” said he, after a pause—“it is true, I have had luck with me. The very trees under whose branches we are walking—could they but speak—might bear witness to a time when I strolled here as poor and as hopeless as the meanest outcast that walks the high road. I had not one living soul to say, ‘Be of good cheer, your time will come yet.’ My case had even more than the ordinary obstacles to success; for fate had placed

me where every day, every hour of my life, should show me the disparity between myself and those high-born great to whose station I aspired. If you only knew, Lady Augusta," added he, in a tone tremulous with emotion, "what store I laid on any passing kindness—the simplest word, the merest look—how even a gesture or a glance lighted hope within my heart, or made it cold and dreary within me, you'd wonder that a creature such as this could nerve itself to the stern work of life."

"I was but a child at the time you speak of," said she, looking down bashfully; "but I remember you perfectly."

"Indeed!" said he, with an accent that implied pleasure.

"So well," continued she, "that there is not a spot in the wood where we used to take our lesson-books in summer, but lives still associated in my mind with those hours, so happy they were!"

"I always feared that I had left very different memories behind me here," said he, in a low voice.

"You were unjust, then," said she, in a tone still lower—"unjust to yourself, and to us."

They walked on without speaking, a strange mysterious consciousness that each was in the other's thoughts standing in place of converse between them. At length, stopping suddenly in front of a little rocky cavern, over which aquatic plants were drooped, she said, "Do you remember calling that 'Calypso's grotto?' It bears no other name still."

"I remember more," said he; and then stopped in some confusion.

"Some girlish folly of mine, perhaps," broke she in hurriedly; "but once for all, let me ask forgiveness for many a thoughtless word, many a childish wrong. You, who know all tempers and moods of men as few know them, can well make allowances for natures spoiled as ours were—pampered and flattered by those about us, living in a little world of our own here. And yet, do not think me silly when I own that I would it were all back again. The childhood and the lessons, ay, the dreary Telemachus, that gave me many a headache, and the tiresome hours at the piano, and the rest of it." She glanced a covert glance at Dunn, and saw that his features were a shade darker and gloomier than before. "Mind," said she, quickly, "I don't ask you to *join* in this wish. You have lived to achieve great successes—to be courted, and sought after, and caressed. I don't expect you to care to live over again hours which perhaps you look back to with a sort of horror."

"I dare not well tell you how I look back to them," said he, in a half irresolute manner.

Had there been any to mark it, he would have seen that her cheek flushed and her dark eyes grew darker as he spoke these words. She was far too skilful a tactician to disturb, even by a syllable, the thoughts she knew his words indicated, and again they sauntered along in silence, till they found themselves standing on the shore of the sea.

"How is it that the sea, like the sky, seems ever to inspire the wish that says, 'What lies beyond that?'" said Dunn, dreamily.

"It comes of that longing, perhaps, for some imaginary existence out of the life of daily care and struggle——"

"I believe so," said he, interrupting. "One is so apt to forget that another horizon is sure to rise to view—another bourne to be passed!" Then suddenly, as if with a rapid change of thought, he said, "What a charming spot this is to pass one's days in—so calm, so peaceful, so undisturbed!"

"I love it!" said she, in a low, murmuring voice, as though speaking to herself.

"And I could love it too," said he, ardently, "if fortune would but leave me to a life of repose and quiet."

"It is so strange to hear men like yourself—men who in a measure make their own fate—always accuse Destiny. Who is there, let me ask," said she, with a boldness the stronger that she saw an influence followed her words—"who is there who could with more of graceful pride retire from the busy cares of life than he who has worked so long, so successfully, for his fellow-men? Who is there who, having achieved fortune, friends, station—Why do you shake your head?" cried she, suddenly.

"You estimate my position too flatteringly, Lady Augusta," said he, slowly, and like one labouring with some painful reflection. "Of fortune, if that mean wealth, I have more than I need. Friends—what the world calls such—I suppose I may safely say I possess my share of. But as to station, by which I would imply the rank which stamps a certain grade in society, and carries with it a prestige——"

"It is your own whenever you care to demand it," broke she in. "It is not when the soldier mounts the breach that his country showers its honours on him—it is when, victory achieved, he comes back great and triumphant. You have but to declare that your labours are completed, your campaign finished, to meet any, the proudest, recognition your services could claim. You

know my father," said she, suddenly changing her voice to a tone at once confidential and intimate—"you know how instinctively, as it were, he surrounds himself with all the prejudices of his order. Well, even he, as late as last night, said to me, 'Dunn ought to be one of us, Augusta. We want men of his stamp. The lawyers overbear us just now. It is men of wider sympathies, less technical, less narrowed by a calling, that we need. He ought to be one of us.' Knowing what a great admission that was for one like *him*, I ventured to ask how this was to be accomplished. Ministers are often the last to ratify the judgment the public has pronounced."

"Well, and what said he to that?" asked Dunn, eagerly.

"'Let him only open his mind to *me*, Augusta,' said he. 'If he but have the will, I promise to show him the way.'"

Dunn uttered no reply, but with a bent-down head walked along, deep in thought.

"May I ask you to lend me your arm, Mr. Dunn?" said Lady Augusta, in her gentlest of voices; and Dunn's heart beat with a strange, proud significance as he gave it.

They spoke but little as they returned to the cottage.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

"A LETTER TO JACK."

LONG after the other inhabitants of the Hermitage were fast locked in sleep, Sybella Kellett sat at her writing-desk. It was the time—the only time—she called her own, and she was devoting it to a letter to her brother. Mr. Dunn had told her on that morning that an opportunity offered to send anything she might have for him, and she had arranged a little packet—some few things, mostly worked by her own hands—for the poor soldier in the Crimea.

As one by one she placed the humble articles in the box, her tears fell upon them—tears half pleasure, and half sorrow—for she thought how "poor dear Jack" would feel as each new object came before him, reminding him of some thoughtful care, some anticipation of this or that casualty; and when at last all seemed packed and nothing forgotten, she arose and crossed the room towards a little shelf, from which she took a small volume, and, kissing it twice fervently, laid it in the box. This done, she knelt down, and, with her head between her hands, close pressed and hidden, prayed long and fervently. If her features wore a look of sadness as she arose, it was of sadness not without hope; indeed, her face was like one of those fair Madonnas which Raphael has left us—faces where trustfulness is more eminently the characteristic than any other quality.

Her long letter was nearly completed, and she sat down to add the last lines to it. It had grown into a sort of journal of her daily life, its cares and occupations, and she was half shocked at the length to which it extended. "I am not," wrote she, "so unreasonable as to ask you to write as I have done, but it would be an unspeakable pleasure if you would let me give the public

some short extracts from the letters you send me, they are so unlike those our papers teem with. The tone of complaint is, I know, the popular one. Some clever correspondents have struck the key-note with success, and the public only listen with eagerness where the tale is of sufferings which might have been spared, and hardships that need not have been borne. But you, dear Jack, have taken another view of events, and one which, I own, pleases me infinitely more. You say truly, besides, that these narratives, interesting as no doubt they are to all at home here, exercise a baneful influence on the military spirit of our army. Men grow too much for newspaper distinction, too little for that noble *esprit de camaraderie* which is the finest enthusiasm of the service. I could not help feeling, as if I heard your voice as I read, 'I wish they wouldn't go on telling us about muddy roads, raw coffee, wet canvas, and short rations; we don't talk of these things so much amongst ourselves; we came out here to thrash the Russians, and none of us ever dreamed it was to be done without rough usage.' What you add about the evil effects of the soldier appealing to the civilian public for any redress of his grievances, real or imaginary, is perfectly correct. It is a great mistake.

"You must forgive my having shown your last letter to Mr. Davenport Dunn, who cordially joins me in desiring that you will let me send it to the papers. He remarks truly, that the Irish temperament of making the ludicrous repay the disagreeable is wanting in all this controversy, and that the public mind would experience a great relief if one writer would come forth to show that the bivouac fire is not wanting in pleasant stories, nor even the wet night in the trenches without its burst of light-hearted gaiety.

"Mr. Dunn fully approves of your determination not to 'purchase.' It would be too hard if you could not obtain your promotion from the ranks after such services as yours; so he says, and so, I suppose, I ought to concur with him; but as this seven hundred pounds lies sleeping at the banker's while your hard life goes on, I own I half doubt if he be right. I say this to show you, once for all, that I will accept nothing of it. I am provided for amply, and I meet with a kindness and consideration for which I was quite unprepared. Of course, I endeavour to make my services requite this treatment, and do my best to merit the good-will shown me.

"I often wonder, dear Jack, when we are to meet, and where. Two more isolated creatures there can scarcely be on earth than

ourselves, and we ought, at least, to cling to each other. Not but I feel that, in thus struggling alone with fortune, we are storing up knowledge of ourselves, and experiences of life that will serve us hereafter. When I read in your letters how by many a little trait of character you can endear yourself to your poor comrades, softening the hardship of their lot by charms and graces acquired in another sphere from theirs, I feel doubly strong in going forth amongst the poor families of our neighbourhood, and doubly hopeful that even I may carry my share of comfort to some poorer and more neglected.

"The last object I have placed in your box, dearest Jack—it will be the first to reach your hands—is my prayer-book. You have often held it with me, long, long ago! Oh, if I dared to wish, it would be for that time again when we were children, with one heart between us. Let us pray, my dear brother, that we may live to meet and be happy as we then were; but if that is not to be—if one be destined to remain alone a wanderer here—pray, my dearest brother, that the lot fall not to me, who am weak-hearted and dependent.

"The day is already beginning to break, and I must close this. My heartfelt prayer and blessings go with it over the seas. Again and again, God bless you."

Why was it that still she could not seal that letter, but sat gazing sadly on it, while at times she turned to the open pages of poor Jack's last epistle to her?

CHAPTER XL.

SCHEMES AND PROJECTS.

THE post-horses ordered for Mr. Dunn's carriage arrived duly at break of day; but from some change of purpose, of whose motive this veracious history can offer no explanation, that gentleman did not take his departure, but merely despatched a messenger to desire Mr. Hanks would come over to the Hermitage.

"I shall remain here to-day, Hanks," said he, carelessly, "and not impossibly to-morrow also. There's something in the air here suits me, and I have not felt quite well latterly."

Mr. Hanks bowed, but not even his long-practised reserve could conceal the surprise he felt at this allusion to health or well-being. Positive illness he could understand—a fever or a broken leg were intelligible ills—but the slighter casualties of passing indispositions were weaknesses that he could not imagine a business mind could descend to: no more than he could fancy a man's being turned from pursuing his course because some one had accidentally jostled him in the streets.

Dunn was too acute a reader of men's thoughts not to perceive the impression his words had produced, but, with the indifference he ever bestowed upon inferiors, he went on:

"Forward my letters here till you hear from me—there's nothing so very pressing at this moment that cannot wait my return to town. Stay—I was to have had a dinner on Saturday; you'll have to put them off. Clowes will show you the list; and let some of the evening papers mention my being unavoidably detained in the south—say nothing about indisposition."

"Of course not, Sir," said Hanks, quite shocked at such an indiscretion being deemed possible.

"And why, 'of course,' Mr. Hanks?" said Dunn, slowly. "I never knew it was amongst the prerogatives of active minds to be exempt from ailment."

"A bad thing to speak about, Sir—a very bad thing indeed," said Hanks, solemnly. "You constantly hear people remark, 'He was never the same man since that last attack.'"

"Psha!" said Dunn, contemptuously.

"I assure you, Sir, I speak the sense of the community. The old adage says, 'Two removes are as bad as a fire,' and in the same spirit I would say, 'Two gouty seizures are equal to a retirement.'"

"Absurdity!" said Dunn, angrily. "I never have acknowledged—I never will acknowledge—any such accountability to the world."

"They bring us 'to book' whether we will or not," said Hanks, sturdily.

Dunn started at the words, and turned away to hide his face; and well was it he did so, for it was pale as ashes, even to the lips, which were actually livid.

"You may expect me by Sunday morning, Hanks,"—he spoke without turning round—"and let me have the balance-sheet of the Ossory Bank to look over. We must make no more advances to the gentry down there; we must restrict our discounts."

"Impossible, Sir, impossible! There must be no discontent—for the present at least," said Hanks, and his voice sunk to a whisper.

Dunn wheeled round till he stood full before him, and thus they remained for several seconds, each staring steadfastly at the other.

"You don't mean to say, Hanks——?" He stopped.

"I do, Sir," said the other, slowly, "and I say it advisedly."

"Then there must be some gross mismanagement, Sir," said Dunn, haughtily. "This must be looked to! Except that loan of forty-seven thousand pounds to Lord Lackington, secured by mortgage on the estate it went to purchase, with what has this Bank supplied us?"

"Remember, Sir," whispered Hanks, cautiously glancing around the room as he spoke, "the loan to the Viscount was advanced by ourselves at six per cent., and the estate was bought in under your own name; so that, in fact, it is to us the Bank have to look as their security."

"And am I not sufficient for such an amount, Mr. Hanks?" said he, sneeringly.

"I trust you are, Sir, and for ten times the sum. Time is everything in these affairs. The ship that would float over the bar at high water, would stick fast at half-flood."

"The 'Time' I am anxious for is a very different one," said Dunn, reflectively. "It is the time when I shall no longer be harassed with these anxieties. Life is not worth the name when it excludes the thought of all enjoyment."

"Business is business, Sir," said Mr. Hanks, with all the solemnity with which such men deliver platitudes as wisdom.

"Call it slavery, and you'll be nearer the mark," broke in Dunn. "For what or for whom, let me ask you, do I undergo all this laborious toil? For a world that at the first check or stumble, will overwhelm me with slanders. Let me but afford them a pretext, and they will debit me with every disaster their own recklessness has caused, and forget to credit me with all the blessings my wearisome life has conferred upon them."

"The way of the world, Sir," sighed Hanks, with the same stereotyped philosophy.

"I know well," continued Dunn, not heeding the other's commonplace, "that there are men who would utilise the station which I have acquired; they'd soon convert into sterling capital the unprofitable gains that I am content with. They'd be Cabinet Ministers—Peers—Ambassadors—Colonial Governors. It's only men like myself work without wages."

"'The labourer is worthy of his hire,' says the old proverb." Mr. Hanks was not aware of the authority, but quoted what he believed a popular saying.

"Others there are," continued Dunn, still deep in his own thoughts, "that would consult their own ease, and, throwing off this drudgery, devote what remained to them of life to the calm enjoyments of a home."

Mr. Hanks was disposed to add, "Home, sweet home," but he coughed down the impulse, and was silent.

Dunn walked the room with his arms crossed on his breast and his head bent down, deep in his own reflections, while his lips moved, as if speaking to himself. Meanwhile, Mr. Hanks busied himself gathering together his papers, preparatory to departure.

"They've taken that fellow Redlines. I suppose you've heard it?" said he, still sorting and arranging the letters.

"No," said Dunn, stopping suddenly in his walk; "where was he apprehended?"

"In Liverpool. He was to have sailed in the *Persia*, and had

his place taken as a German watchmaker going to Boston."

"What was it he did? I forget," said Dunn, carelessly.

"He did, as one may say, a little of everything; issued false scrip on the Great Coast Railway, sold and pocketed the price of some thirty thousand pounds' worth of their plant, mortgaged their securities, and cooked their annual accounts so cleverly, that for four years nobody had the slightest suspicion of any mischief."

"What was it attracted the first attention to these frauds, Hanks?" said Dunn, apparently curious to hear an interesting story.

"The merest accident in the world. He had sent a few lines to the Duke of Wycombe to enquire the character and capacity of a French cook. Pollard, the Duke's man of business, happened to be in the room when the note came, and his Grace begged he would answer it for him. Pollard, as you are aware, is Chairman of the Coast Line, and when he saw the name 'Lionel Redlines,' he was off in a giffy to the Board-room with the news."

"One would have thought a little foresight might have saved him from such a stupid mistake as this," said Dunn, gravely. "A mode of living so disproportioned to his well-known means must inevitably have elicited remark."

"At any other moment, so it would," said Hanks; "but we live in a gambling age, and no one can say where, when, and how any one wins a large stake. Look at those fellows in France, for instance. There are men there who, six months ago, couldn't get cash for a bill of a thousand francs who are now owners of millions upon millions. There is no such thing as rich or poor now, for you may be either, or both, within any twenty-four hours."

"They'll transport this man Redlines, I suppose?" said Dunn, after a pause.

"That they will; but my own opinion is, they'd rather he had got clean away; there's always something dark in these affairs. Take my word for it, you'll see that the others—the men on the Board—are not clear of it. Shares were declining in that line—steadily declining—this many a day, in face of an eight per cent. dividend."

"And now he will be transported!" broke in Dunn, from the depth of a reverie.

"Many don't mind it!" said Hanks.

"How do you mean—not mind it?" asked Dunn, angrily. "Is deportation to a penal colony no punishment?"

"I won't go that far," replied Hanks; "but when a man has left things comfortable at home, it's not the bad thing people generally imagine."

"I don't understand you," said Dunn, shortly.

"Well, take Sir John Chesham's case as an instance. He was the founder of that great swindle, the Greenwich Royal Bank. When they transported him, Lady Chesham went out with the next mail-packet, took a handsome house and furnished it, and then, waiting till Sir John got his ticket-of-leave, she hired him as a footman. And what's more, they that used to quarrel all day long at home here, are now perfect turtle-doves. To be sure, there is something in the fact that she has to send in a quarterly report of his conduct; and it's a fine thing to be able to threaten short rations and wool-carding to a refractory husband."

The jocosé tone assumed by Mr. Hanks in this remark met with no response from Davenport Dunn, who only looked graver and more thoughtful.

"How strange!" muttered he, to himself. "In morals as in medicine, it is the amount of the dose decides whether the remedy be curative or poisonous." Then, with a quick start round, he said, "Hanks, do you remember that terrific accident which occurred a few years ago in France—at Angers, I think the place was called? A regiment in marching order had to cross a suspension-bridge, and coming on with the measured tramp of the march, the united force was too much for the strength of the structure; the iron beams gave way, and all were precipitated into the stream below. This is an apt illustration of what we call Credit. It will bear, and with success, considerable pressure if it be irregular, dropping, and incidental. Let the forces, however, be at once consentaneous and united—let the men keep step—and down comes the bridge! Ah, Hanks, am I not right?"

"I believe you are, Sir," said Hanks, who was not quite certain that he comprehended the illustration.

"His Lordship is waiting breakfast, Sir," said a smartly-dressed footman at the door.

"I will be down in a moment. I believe, Hanks, we have not forgotten anything? The Cloyne and Carrick Company had better be wound up; and that waste-land project—let me have the papers to look over. You think we ought to discount those bills of Barrington's?"

"I'm sure of it, Sir. The people at the Royal Bank would take them to-morrow."

"The credit of the Bank must be upheld, Hanks. The libellous articles of those newspapers are doing us great damage, timid shareholders assail us with letters, and some have actually demanded back their deposits. I have it, Hanks!" cried he, as a sudden thought struck him—"I have it! Take a special train at once for town, and fetch me the balance-sheet and the list of all convertible securities. You can be back here—let us see—by to-morrow at noon, or, at latest, to-morrow evening. By that time I shall have matured my plan."

"I should like to hear some hint of what you intend," said Hanks.

"You shall know all to-morrow," said he, as he nodded a good-by, and descended to the breakfast-room. He turned short, however, at the foot of the stairs, and returned to his chamber, where Hanks was still packing up his papers. "On second thoughts, Hanks, I believe I had better tell you now," said he. "Sit down."

And they both sat down at the table, and never moved from it for an hour. Twice—even thrice—there came messages from below, requesting Mr. Dunn's presence at the breakfast-table, but a hurried "Yes, immediately," was the reply, and he came not.

At last they rose; Hanks the first, saying, as he looked at his watch, "I shall just be in time. It is a great idea, Sir,—a very great idea indeed, and does you infinite credit."

"It ought to have success, Hanks," said he, calmly.

"Ought, Sir! It *is* success. It is as fine a piece of tactics as I ever heard of. Trust *me* to carry it out, that's all."

"Remember, Hanks, time is everything. Good-by!"

CHAPTER XLI.

"A COUNTRY WALK."

WHAT a charming day was that at the Hermitage! every one pleased, happy, and good-humoured! With a frankness that gave universal satisfaction, Mr. Dunn declared he could not tear himself away. Engagements the most pressing, business appointments of the deepest moment, awaited him on every side, but, "No matter what it cost," said he, "I will have my holiday!" Few flatteries are more successful than those little appeals to the charms and fascinations of a quiet home circle; and when some hard-worked man of the world, some eminent leader at the Bar, or some much-sought Physician, condescends to tell us that the world of clients must wait while he lingers in our society, the assurance never fails to be pleasing. It is, indeed, complimentary to feel that we are, in all the easy indolence of leisure, enjoying the hours of one whose minutes are valued as guineas; our own value insensibly rises at the thought, and we associate ourselves in our estimate of the great man. When Mr. Davenport Dunn had made this graceful declaration, he added another, not less gratifying, that he was completely at his Lordship's and Lady Augusta's orders, as regarded the great project on which they desired to have his opinion.

"The best way is to come down and see the spot yourself, Dunn. We'll walk over there together, and Augusta will acquaint you with our notions as we go along."

"I ought to mention," said Dunn, "that yesterday, by the merest chance, I had the opportunity of looking over a little sketch of your project."

"Oh, Miss Kellett!" broke in Lady Augusta, colouring slightly. "It is very clever, very prettily written, but scarcely

practical, scarcely business-like enough for a prosaic person like myself. A question of this kind is a great financial problem, not a philanthropic experiment. Don't you agree with me?"

"Perfectly," said he, bowing.

"And its merits are to be tested by figures, and not by Utopian dreams of felicity. Don't you think so?"

He bowed again, and smiled approvingly.

"I am aware," said she in a sort of half confusion, "what rashness it would be in me to say this to any one less largely-minded than yourself; how I should expose myself to the censure of being narrow-hearted, and worldly, and so forth; but I am not afraid of such judgments from you."

"Nor have you need to dread them," said he, in a voice a little above a whisper.

"Young ladies, like Miss Kellett, are often possessed by the ambition—a very laudable sentiment, no doubt—of distinguishing themselves by these opinions. It is, as it were, a 'trick of the time' we live in, and, with those who do not move in 'society,' has its success too."

The peculiar intonation of that one word "society" gave the whole point and direction of this speech. There was in it that which seemed to say, "*This* is the real tribunal! Here is the one true court where claims are recognised and shams nonsuited." Nor was it lost upon Mr. Davenport Dunn. More than once—ay, many a time before—had he been struck by the reference to that Star Chamber of the well-bred world. He had even heard a noble Lord on the Treasury benches sneer down a sturdy champion of Manchesterism, by suggesting that in a certain circle, where the honourable gentleman never came, very different opinions prevailed from those announced by him.

While Dunn was yet pondering over this mystic word, Lord Glengariff came to say that, as Miss Kellett required his presence to look over some papers in the library, they might stroll slowly along till he overtook them.

As they sauntered along under the heavy shade of the great beech-trees, the sun streaking at intervals the velvety sward beneath their feet, while the odour of the fresh hay was wafted by on a faint light breeze, Dunn was unconsciously brought back in memory to the "long, long ago," when he walked the self-same spot in a gloom only short of despair. Who could have predicted the day when he should stroll there, with *her* at his side—*her* arm within his own—*her* voice appealing in tones of confidence and friendship? His great ambitions had grown

with his successes, and as he rose higher and higher, his aims continued to mount upwards, but here was a sentiment that dated from the time of his obscurity, here, a day-dream that had filled his imagination when from imagination alone could be derived the luxury of triumph, and now it was realised, and now——

Who is to say what strange wild conflict went on within that heart where worldliness felt its sway for once disputed? Did there yet linger there in the midst of high ambitions some trait of boyish love, or was it that he felt this hour to be the crowning triumph of his long life of toil?

"If I were not half ashamed to disturb your reverie," said Lady Augusta, smiling, "I'd tell you to look at that view yonder. See where the coast stretches along there, broken by cliff and headland, with those rocky islands breaking the calm sea-line, and say if you saw anything finer in your travels abroad?"

"Was I in a reverie? have I been dreaming?" cried he, suddenly, not regarding the scene, but turning his eyes fully upon herself. "And yet you'd forgive me were I to confess to you of what it was I was thinking."

"Then tell it directly, for I own your silence piqued me, and I stopped speaking when I perceived I was not listened to."

"Perhaps I am too confident when I say you would forgive me?"

"You have it in your power to learn, at all events," said she, laughingly.

"But not to recal my words if they should have been uttered rashly," said he, slowly.

"Shall I tell you a great fault you have—perhaps your greatest?" asked she, quickly.

"Do, I entreat of you."

"And you pledge yourself to take my candour well, and bear me no malice afterwards?"

"I promise," said he.

"It is a coldness—a reserve almost amounting to distrust, which seems actually to dominate in your temper. Be frank with me, now, and say fairly, was not this long alley reviving all the thoughts of long ago, and were you not summing up the fifty-one little grudges you had against that poor silly child who used to torment and fret you, and instead of honestly owning all this, you fell back upon that stern dignity of manner I have just complained of? Besides," added she, as though hurried away by some strong impulse, "if it would quiet your spirit to know you were avenged, you may feel satisfied."

"As how?" asked he, eagerly, and not comprehending to what she pointed.

"Simply thus," resumed she. "As I continued to mark and read of your great career in life, the marvellous successes which met you in each new enterprise, how with advancing fortune you ever showed yourself equal to the demand made upon your genius, I thought with shame and humiliation over even my childish follies, how often I must have grieved—have hurt you! Over and over have I said, 'Does he ever remember? Can he forgive me?' And yet there was a sense of exquisite pleasure in the midst of all my sorrow as I thought over all these childish vanities, and said to myself, 'This man, whom all are now flattering and fawning upon, was the same I used to irritate with my caprices, and worry with my whims!'"

"I never dreamed that you remembered me," said he, in a voice tremulous with delight.

"Your career made a romance for me," said she, eagerly. "I could repeat many of those vigorous speeches you made—those spirited addresses. One in particular I remember well, it was when refusing the offer of the Athlone burgesses to represent their town; you alluded so happily to the cares which occupied you—less striking than legislative duties, but not less important—or, as you phrased it, yours was like the part of those 'who sound the depth and buoy the course that thundering three-deckers are to follow.' Do you remember the passage? And again, that proud humility with which, alluding to the wants of the poor, you said, 'I, who have carried my musket in the ranks of the people!' Let me tell you, Sir," added she, playfully, "these are very haughty avowals after all, and savour just as much of personal pride as the insolent declarations of many a pampered courtier!"

Dunn's face grew crimson, and his chest swelled with an emotion of intense delight.

"Shall I own to you," continued she, still running on with what seemed an irrepressible freedom, "that it appears scarcely real to me to be here talking to you about yourself, and your grand enterprises, and your immense speculations. You have been so long, to my mind, the great genius of wondrous achievements, that I cannot yet comprehend the condescension of your strolling along here as if this world could spare you."

If Dunn did not speak, it was that his heart was too full for words; but he pressed the round arm that leaned upon him closer to his side, and felt a thrill of happiness through him.

"By the way," said she, after a pause, "I have a favour to ask of you: Papa would be charmed to have a cast of Marochetti's bust of you, and yet does not like to ask for it. May I venture——"

"Too great an honour to me," muttered Dunn. "Would you—I mean, would he—accept——?"

"Yes, I will, and with gratitude, not but I think the likeness hard and harsh. It is, very probably, what you are to that marvellous world of politicians and financiers you live amongst, but not such as your friends recognise you—what you are to-day, for instance."

"And what may that be?" asked he, playfully.

"I was going to say an imprudence, and I only caught myself in time."

"Do, then, let me hear it," said he, eagerly, "for I am quite ready to cap it with another."

"Yours be the first then," said she, laughing. "Is it not customary to put the amendment before the original motion?"

Both Mr. Dunn and his fair companion were destined to be rescued from the impending indiscretion by the arrival of Lord Glengariff, who, mounted on his pony, suddenly appeared beside them.

"Well, Dunn," cried he, as he came up, "has she made a convert of you? Are you going to advocate the great project here?"

Dunn looked sideways towards Lady Augusta, who, seeing his difficulty, at once said, "Indeed, Papa, we never spoke of the scheme. I doubt if either of us as much as remembered there was such a thing."

"Well, I'm charmed to find that your society could prove so fascinating, Augusta," said Lord Glengariff, with some slight irritation of manner, "but I must ask of Mr. Dunn to bear with me while I descend to the very commonplace topic which has such interest for me. The very spot we stand on is admirably suited to take a panoramic view of our little bay, the village, and the background. Carry your eyes along towards the rocky promontory on which the stone pines are standing, we begin there."

Now, most worthy reader, although the noble Lord pledged himself to be brief, and really meant to keep his word, and although he fancied himself to be graphic—truth is truth—he was lamentably prolix and confused beyond all endurance. As for Dunn, he listened with an exemplary patience; perhaps his thoughts were rambling away elsewhere—perhaps he was com-

pensated for the weariness by the occasional glances which met him from eyes now downcast—now bent softly upon him. Meanwhile, the old Lord floundered on, amidst crescents and bathing lodges, yacht stations and fisheries, aiding his memory occasionally with little notes, which, as he contrived to mistake, only served to make the description less intelligible. At length, he had got so far as to conjure up a busy, thriving, well-to-do watering-place, sought after by the fashionable world that once had loved Brighton or Dieppe. He had peopled the shore with loungers, and the hotels with visitors; equipages were seen flocking in, and a hissing steamer in the harbour was already sounding the note of departure for Liverpool or Holyhead, when Dunn, suddenly rousing himself from what might have been a reverie, said, "And the money, my Lord. The means to do all this?"

"The money—the means—we look to *you*, Dunn, to answer that question. Our scheme is a great shareholding company of five thousand—no, fifty—nay, I'm wrong. What is it Augusta?"

"The exact amount scarcely signifies much, my Lord. The excellence of the project once proved, money can always be had. What I desired to know was, if you already possessed the confidence of some great capitalist favourable to the undertaking, or is it simply its intrinsic merits which recommend it?"

"Its own merits, of course," broke in Lord Glengariff, hastily. "Are they not sufficient?"

"I am not in a position to affirm or deny that opinion," said Dunn, gravely. "Let me see," added he to himself, while he drew a pencil from his pocket, and on the back of a letter proceeded to scratch certain figures. He continued to calculate thus for some minutes, when at last he said, "If you like to try it, my Lord, with an advance of say twenty thousand pounds, there will be no great difficulty in raising the money. Once afloat, you will be in a position to enlist shareholders easily enough." He spoke with all the cool indifference of one discussing the weather.

"I must say, Dunn," cried Lord Glengariff, with warmth, "this is a very noble—a very generous offer. I conclude my personal security——"

"We can talk over all this at another time, my Lord," broke in Dunn, smiling. "Lady Augusta will leave us if we go into questions of bonds and parchments. My first care will be to send you down Mr. Steadman, a very competent person, who will make the necessary surveys; his report, too, will be important in the share market."

"So that the scheme enlists your co-operation, Dunn—so that we have *you* with us," cried the old Lord, rubbing his hands, "I have no fears as to success."

"May we reckon upon so much?" whispered Lady Augusta, while a long, soft, meaning glance stole from her eyes.

Dunn bent his head in assent, while his face grew crimson.

"I say, Augusta," whispered Lord Glengariff, "we have made a capital morning's work of it—eh?"

"I hope so, too," said she. And her eyes sparkled with an expression of triumph.

"There is only one condition I would bespeak, my Lord. It is this: the money market at this precise moment is unsettled, over-speculation has already created a sort of panic, so that you will kindly give me a little time—very little will do—to arrange the advance. Three weeks ago we were actually glutted with money, and now there are signs of what is called tightness in discounts."

"Consult your own convenience in every respect," said the old Lord, courteously.

"Nothing would surprise me less than a financial crisis over here," said Dunn, solemnly. "Our people have been rash in their investments latterly, and there is always a retribution upon inordinate gain!"

Whether it was the topic itself warmed him, or the gentle pressure of Lady Augusta's arm as in encouragement of his sentiments, but Dunn continued to "improve the occasion" as they strolled along homeward, inveighing in very choice terms against speculative gambling, and deploring the injury done to honest, patient industry by those examples of wealth acquired without toil and accumulated without thrift. He really treated the question well and wisely, and when he passed from the mere financial consideration to the higher one of "morals" and the influence exerted upon national character, he actually grew eloquent.

Let us acknowledge that the noble Lord did not participate in all his daughter's admiration of this high-sounding harangue, nor was he without a sort of lurking suspicion that he was listening to a lecture upon his own greed and covetousness; he, however, contrived to throw in at intervals certain little words of concurrence, and in this way occupied they arrived at the Hermitage.

It is not always that the day which dawns happily continues bright and unclouded to its close; yet this was such a one. The

dinner passed off most agreeably, the evening in the drawing-room was delightful. Lady Augusta sang prettily enough to please even a more critical ear than Mr. Dunn's, and she had a tact, often wanting in better performers, to select the class of music likely to prove agreeable to her hearers. There is a very considerable number of people who like pictures for the story and music for the sentiment, and for these high art is less required than something which shall appeal to their peculiar taste. But, while we are confessing, let us own, that if Mr. Dunn liked "the Melodies," it assuredly added to their charm to hear them sung by a Peer's daughter; and as he lay back in his well-cushioned chair, and drank in the sweet sounds, it seemed to him that he was passing a very charming evening.

Like many other vulgar men in similar circumstances, he wondered at the ease and unconstraint he felt in such choice company! He could not help contrasting the tranquil beatitude of his sensations with what he had fancied must be the coldness and reserve of such society. He was, as he muttered to himself, as much at home as in his own house, and truly, as with one hand in his breast, while with the fingers of the other he beat time—and all falsely—he looked the very ideal of his order.

"Confound the fellow!" muttered the old Peer, as he glanced at him over his newspaper, "he is insufferably at his ease amongst us!"

And Sybella Kellett, where was she all this time—or have we forgotten her? Poor Sybella! she had been scarcely noticed at dinner, scarcely spoken to in the drawing-room, and she had slipped unperceived away to her own room.

They never missed her.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE GERM OF A BOLD STROKE.

IF Mr. Davenport Dunn had passed a day of unusual happiness and ease, the night which followed was destined to be one of intense labour and toil. Scarcely had the quiet of repose settled down upon "the Hermitage," than the quick tramp of horses, urged to their sharpest trot, was heard approaching, and soon after Mr. Hanks descended from his travelling-carriage at the door.

Dunn had been standing at his open window gazing into the still obscurity of the night, and wondering at what time he might expect him, when he arrived.

"You have made haste, Hanks," said he, not wasting a word in salutation. "I scarcely looked to see you before daybreak."

"Yes, Sir; the special train behaved well, and the posters did their part as creditably. I had about four hours altogether in Dublin, but they were quite sufficient for everything."

"For everything?" repeated Dunn.

"Yes; you'll find nothing has been forgotten. Before leaving Cork, I telegraphed to Meekins of the *Post*, and to Browne of the *Banner*, to meet me on my arrival at Henrietta-street. Strange enough, they both were anxiously waiting for some instructions on the very question at issue. They came armed with piles of provincial papers, all written in the same threatening style. One in particular, the *Upper Ossory Beacon*, had an article headed, "Who is our Dionysius?"

"Never mind that," broke in Dunn, impatiently. "You explained to them the line to be taken?"

"Fully, Sir. I told them that they were to answer the attacks weakly, feebly, deprecating in general terms the use of personalities, and throwing out little appeals for forbearance, and so on.

On the question of the Bank, I said, 'Be somewhat more resolute; hint that certain aspersions might be deemed actionable; that wantonly to assail credit is an offence punishable at law; and then dwell upon the benefits already diffused by these establishments, and implore all who have the interest of Ireland at heart not to suffer a spirit of faction to triumph over their patriotism.'"

"Will they understand the part?" asked Dunn, more impatiently than before.

"Thoroughly; Browne, indeed, has a leader already 'set up'——"

"What do I care for all these?" broke in Dunn, peevishly. "Surely no man knows better than yourself that these fellows are only the feathers that show where the wind blows. As to any influence they wield over public opinion, you might as well tell me that the man who sweats a guinea can sway the Stock Exchange."

Hankes shook his head dissentingly, but made no reply.

"You have brought the Bank accounts and the balance-sheet?"

"Yes, they are all here."

"Have you made any rough calculation as to the amount——?"

He stopped.

"Fifty thousand ought to cover it easily—I mean with what they have themselves in hand. The first day will be a heavy one, but I don't suspect the second will, particularly when it is known that we are discounting freely as ever."

"And now as to the main point?" said Dunn.

"All right, Sir. Etheridge's securities give us seventeen thousand; we have a balance of about eleven on that account of Lord Lackington; I drew out the twelve hundred of Kellett's at once; and several other small sums, which are all ready."

"It is a bold stroke!" muttered Dunn, musingly.

"None but an original mind could have hit upon it, Sir. I used to think the late Mr. Robins a very great man, Sir—and he *was* a great man—but this is a cut above him."

"Let us say so when it has succeeded, Hankes," said Dunn, with a half-smile.

As he spoke, he seated himself at the table, and, opening a massive account-book, was soon deep in its details. Hankes took a place beside him, and they both continued to con over the long column of figures together.

"We stand in a safer position than I thought, Hankes," said Dunn, leaning back in his chair.

"Yes, Sir; we have been nursing this Ossory Bank for some time. You remember, some time ago, saying to me, 'Hankes, put condition on that horse, we'll have to ride him hard before the season is over?'"

"Well, you have done it cleverly, I must say," resumed Dunn. "The concern is almost solvent."

"Almost, Sir," echoed Hankes.

"What a shake it will give them all, Hankes," said Dunn, gleefully, "when it once sets in, as it will and must, powerfully. The Provincial will stand easily enough."

"To be sure, Sir."

"And the Royal also; but the 'Tyrawley'——"

"And the 'Four Counties,'" added Hankes. "Driscoll is ready with four thousand of the notes 'to open the ball,' as he says, and when Terry's name gets abroad it will be worse to them than a placard on the walls."

"I shall not be sorry for the 'Four Counties.' It was Mr. Morris, the chairman, had the insolence to allude to me in the House, and ask if it were true that the Ministry had recommended Mr. Davenport Dunn as a fit object for the favours of the Crown? That question, Sir, placed my claim in abeyance ever since. The Minister, pledged solemnly to *me*, had to rise in his place and say 'No.' Of course he added the stereotyped sarcasm, 'Not, that if such a decision had been come to, need the Cabinet have shrunk from the responsibility through any fears of the honourable gentleman's indignation.'"

"Well, Mr. Morris will have to pay for his joke now," said Hankes. "I'm told his whole estate is liable to the Bank."

"Every shilling of it. Driscoll has got me all the details."

"Lushington will be the great sufferer by the 'Tyrawley,'" continued Hankes.

"Another of them, Hankes—another of them," cried Dunn, rubbing his hands joyfully. "Tom Lushington—the Honourable Tom, as they called him—blackballed me at 'Brookes's.' They told me his very words: 'It's bad enough to be "Dunned," as we are, out of doors, but let us at least be safe from the infliction at our Clubs.' A sorry jest, but witty enough for those who heard it."

"I don't think he has sixpence."

"No, Sir; nor can he remain a Treasury Lord with a fiat of bankruptcy against him. So much, then, for Tom Lushington! I tell you, Hankes," said he, spiritedly, "next week will have its

catalogue of shipwrecks. There's a storm about to break that none have yet suspected."

"There will be some heavy sufferers," said Hanks, gravely.

"No doubt, no doubt," muttered Dunn. "I never heard of a battle without killed and wounded. I tell you, Sir, again," said he, raising his voice, "before the week ends the shore will be strewn with fragments; we alone will ride through the gale unharmed. It is not fully a month since I showed the Chief Secretary here—ay, and his Excellency also—the insolent but insidious system of attack the Government journals maintain against me, the half-covert insinuations, the impertinent queries, pretended inquiries for mere information's sake. Of course, I got for answer the usual cant about 'freedom of the press,' 'liberty of public discussion,' with the accustomed assurance that the Government had not, in reality, any recognised organ; and, to wind up, there was the laughing question, 'And what do you care, after all, for these fellows?' But now I will show what I *do* care—that I have good and sufficient reason to care—that the calumnies which assail me are directed against my material interests; that it is not Davenport Dunn is 'in cause,' but all the great enterprises associated with his name; that it is not an individual, but the industry of a nation is at stake; and I will say to them, 'Protect me, or——' You remember the significant legend inscribed on the cannon of the Irish Volunteers, 'Independence or——' Take my word for it, I may not speak as loudly as the nine-pounder, but my fire will be to the full as fatal!"

Never before had Hanks seen his chief carried away by any sense of personal injury; he had even remarked, amongst the traits of his great business capacity, that a calm contempt for mere passing opinion was his characteristic, and he was sorely grieved to find that such equanimity could be disturbed. With his own especial quickness Dunn saw what was passing in his lieutenant's mind, and he added, hastily:

"Not that, of all men, I need care for such assaults; powerful even to tyranny as the press has become amongst us, there is one thing more powerful still, and that is—Prosperity! Ay, Sir, there may be cavil and controversy as to your abilities, some may condemn your speech, or carp at your book, they may cry down your statecraft, or deny your diplomacy, but there is a test that all can appreciate, all comprehend, and that is—Success. Have only *that*, Hanks, and the world is with you."

"There's no denying that," said Hanks, solemnly.

"It is the gauge of every man," resumed Dunn—"from him that presides over a Railway Board, to him that sways an Empire. And justly so, too," added he, rapidly. "A man must be a consummate judge of horseflesh that could pick out the winner of the Oaks in a stable, but the scrubbiest varlet on the field can *see* who comes in first on the day of the race! Have you ever been in America, Hanks?" asked he, suddenly.

"Yes; all over the States. I think I know cousin Jonathan as well as I know old John himself."

"You know a very shrewd fellow, then," muttered Dunn; "over-shrewd, mayhap."

"What led you to think of that country now?" asked the other, curiously.

"I scarcely know," said Dunn, carelessly, as he walked the room in thoughtfulness; then added, "If no recognition were to come of these services of mine, I'd just as soon live there as here. I should, at least, be on the level of the best above me. Well," cried he, in a higher tone, "we have some trumps to play out ere it come to that."

Once more they turned to the account-books and the papers before them, for Hanks had many things to explain and various difficulties to unravel. The vast number of those enterprises in which Dunn engaged had eventually blended and mingled all their interests together. Estates and shipping, and banks, mines, railroads, and dock companies, had so often interchanged their securities, each bolstering up the credit of the other in turn, that the whole resembled some immense fortress, where the garrison, too weak for a general defence, was always hastening to some one point or other—the seat of immediate attack. And thus an Irish draining fund was one day called upon to liquidate the demands upon a sub-Alpine railroad, while a Mexican tin mine flew to the rescue of a hosiery scheme in Balbriggan! To have ever a force ready on the point assailed was Dunn's remarkable talent, and he handled his masses like a great master of war.

Partly out of that indolent insolence which power begets, he had latterly been less mindful of the press, less alive to the strictures of journalism, and attacks were made upon him which, directed as they were against his solvency, threatened at any moment to assume a dangerous shape. Roused at last by the peril, he had determined on playing a bold game for fortune, and this it was which now engaged his thoughts, and whose details the dawning day saw him deeply considering. His now great theory was, that a recognised station amongst the nobles of the

land was the one only security against disaster. "Once amongst them," said he, "they will defend me as one of their order." How to effect this grand object had been the long study of his life. But it was more—it was also his secret! They who fancied they knew the man, thoroughly understood the habits of his mind, his passions, his prejudices, and his hopes, never as much as suspected what lay at the bottom of them all. He assumed a sort of manner that in a measure disarmed their suspicion—he affected pride in that middle station of life he occupied, and seemed to glory in those glowing eulogies of commercial ability and capacity which it was the good pleasure of leading journalists just then to deliver. On public occasions he made an even ostentatious display of these sentiments, and Davenport Dunn was often quoted as a dangerous man for an hereditary aristocracy to have against them.

Such was he who now pored over complicated details of figures, intricate and tangled schemes of finance; and yet while his mind embraced them, with other thoughts was he picturing to himself a time when, proud amongst the proudest, he would take his place with the great nobles of the land. It was evident that another had not regarded this ambition as fanciful or extravagant. Lady Augusta—the haughty daughter of one of the haughtiest in the Peerage—as much as said, "it was a fair and reasonable object of hope—then none could deny the claims he preferred, nor any affect to undervalue the vast benefits he had conferred on his country." There was something so truly kind, so touching, too, in the generous tone she assumed, that Dunn dwelt upon it again and again. Knowing all the secret instincts of that mysterious brotherhood as she did, Dunn imagined to himself all the advantage her advice and counsels could render him. "She can direct me in many ways, teaching me how to treat these mysterious high priests as I ought. What shall I do to secure her favour? How enlist it in my cause? Could I make her partner in the enterprise? As the thought flashed across him his cheek burned as if with a flame, and he rose abruptly from the table and walked to the window, fearful lest his agitation might be observed. "That were success, indeed!" muttered he. "What a strong bail bond would it be when I called two English Peers my brothers-in-law, and an Earl for my wife's father. This would at once lead me to the very step of the 'Order.' How many noble families would it interest in my elevation. The Ardens are the best blood of the south—connected widely with the highest in both

countries. Is it possible that this could succeed?" He thought of the old Earl and his intense pride of birth, and his heart misgave him; but then Lady Augusta's gentle tones and gentler looks came to his mind, and he remembered that though a Peer's daughter she was penniless, and—we shame to write it—not young. The Lady Augusta Arden marries the millionaire Mr. Dunn, and the world understands the compact. There are many such matches every season.

"What age would you guess me to be, Hanks?" said he, suddenly turning round.

"I should call you—let me see—a matter of forty-five or forty-six, Sir."

"Older, Hanks—older," said he, with a smile of half-pleasure.

"You don't look it, Sir, I protest you don't. Sitting up all night and working over these accounts, one might, perhaps, call you forty-six; but seeing you as you come down to breakfast after your natural rest, you don't seem forty."

"This same life is too laborious; a man may follow it for the ten or twelve years of his prime, but it becomes downright slavery after that."

"But what is an active mind like yours to do, Sir?" asked Hanks.

"Take his ease and rest himself."

"Ease!—rest! All a mistake, Sir. Great business men can't exist in that lethargy called leisure."

"You are quite wrong, Hanks; if I were the master of some venerable old demesne, like this, for instance, with its timber of centuries' growth, and its charms of scenery, such as we see around us here, I'd ask no better existence than to pass my days in calm retirement, invite a stray friend or two to come and see me, and with books and other resources hold myself aloof from stocks and statecraft, and not so much as ask how are the Funds or who is the Minister."

"I'd be sorry to see you come to that, Sir, I declare I should," said Hanks, earnestly.

"You may live to see it, notwithstanding," said Dunn, with a placid smile.

"Ah, Sir," said Hanks, "it's not the man who has just conceived such a grand idea as this"—and he touched the books before him—"ought to talk of turning hermit."

"We'll see, Hanks—we'll see," said Dunn, calmly. "There come the post-horses—I suppose for you."

"Yes, Sir; I ordered them to be here at six. thought I

should have had a couple of hours in bed by that time; but it doesn't signify, I can sleep anywhere."

"Let me see," said Dunn, calculating. This is Tuesday; now, Friday ought to be the day, the news to reach me on Thursday afternoon; you can send a telegraphic message, and then send on a clerk. Of course, you will know how to make these communications properly. It is better I should remain here in the interval; it looks like security."

"Do you mean to come over yourself, Sir?"

"Of course I do. You must meet me there on Friday morning. Let Mrs. Hailes have the house in readiness in case I might invite any one."

"All shall be attended to, Sir," said Hanks. "I think I'll despatch Wilkins to you with the news; he's an awful fellow to exaggerate evil tidings."

"Very well," said Dunn. "Good night, or, I opine rather, good morning." And he turned away into his bedroom.

CHAPTER LXIII.

THE GARDEN.

FROM the moment that Mr. Davenport Dunn announced he would still continue to enjoy the hospitality of the Hermitage, a feeling of intimacy grew up between himself and his host that almost savoured of old friendship. Lord Glengariff already saw in the distance wealth and affluence—he had secured a co-operation that never knew failure—the one man whose energies could always guarantee success.

It was true, Dunn had not directly pledged himself to anything; he had listened, and questioned, and inquired, and reflected, but given nothing like a definite opinion, far less a promise. But, as the old Lord said, “these fellows are always cautious, always reserved, and whenever they do not oppose, it may be assumed that they concur. At all events, we must manage with delicacy; there must be no haste, no importunity; the best advocacy we can offer to our plans is to make his visit here as agreeable as possible.” Such was the wise counsel he gave his daughter as they strolled through the garden after breakfast, talking over the character and the temperament of their guest.

“By George, Gusty!” cried Lord Glengariff, after a moment’s silence, “I cannot yet persuade myself that this is ‘Old Davy,’ as you and the girls used to call him long ago. Of all the miraculous transformations I have ever witnessed, none of them approaches this!”

“It is wonderful, indeed!” said she, slowly.

“It is not that he has acquired or increased his stock of knowledge—that would not have puzzled me so much, seeing the life of labour he has led—but I go on asking myself, what has become of his former self, of which not a trace nor vestige

remains? where is his shy, hesitating manner, his pedantry, his suspicion? where the intense eagerness to learn what was going on in the house? You remember how his prying disposition used to worry us?"

"I remember," said she, in a low voice.

"There is something, now, in his calm, quiet deportment very like dignity. I protest I should—seeing him for the first time—call him a well-bred man."

"Certainly," said she, in the same tone.

"As little was I prepared for the frank and open manner in which he spoke to me of himself."

"Has he done so?" asked she, with some animation.

"Yes; with much candour, and much good sense, too. He sees the obstacles he has surmounted in life, and he, just as plainly, perceives those that are not to be overcome."

"What may these latter be?" asked she, cautiously.

"It is pretty obvious what they are," said he, half pettishly; "his family—his connexions—his station, in fact."

"How did he speak of these—in what terms, I mean?"

"Modestly and fairly. He did not conceal what he owned to feel as certain hardships, but he was just enough to acknowledge that our social system was a sound one, and worked well."

"It was a great admission," said she, with a very faint smile.

"The Radical crept out only once," said the old Lord, laughing at the recollection. "It was when I remarked that an ancient nobility, like a diamond, required centuries of crystallisation to give it lustre and coherence. 'It were well to bear in mind, my Lord,' said he, 'that it began by being only charcoal'"

She gave a low, quiet laugh, but said nothing.

"He has very sound notions in many things—very sound indeed. I wish, with all my heart, that more of the class he belongs to were animated with *his* sentiments. He is no advocate for pulling down; moderate, reasonable changes—changes in conformity with the spirit of the age, in fact—these he advocates. As I have already said, Gusty, these men are only dangerous when our own exclusiveness has made them so. Treat them fairly, admit them to your society, listen to their arguments, refute them, show them where they have mistaken us, and they are *not* dangerous."

"I suppose you are right," said she, musingly.

"Another thing astonishes me: he has no pride of purse about him—at least, I cannot detect it. He talks of money

reasonably and fairly, acknowledges what it can, and what it cannot do——”

“And what, pray, is that?” broke she in, hastily.

“I don’t think there can be much dispute on *that* score!” said he, in a voice of pique. “The sturdiest advocate for the power of wealth never presumed to say it could make a man—one of us!” said he, after a pause that sent the blood to his face.

“But it can, and does every day,” said she, resolutely. “Our Peerage is invigorated by the wealth as well as by the talent of the class beneath it, and if Mr. Dunn be the millionaire that common report proclaims him, I should like to know why that wealth, and all the influence that it wields, should not be associated with the institutions to which we owe our stability.”

“The wealth and the influence if you like, only not himself,” said the Earl, with a saucy laugh. “My dear Augusta,” he added, in a gentler tone, “he is a most excellent, and a very useful man—where he is. The age suits him, and he suits the age. We live in stirring times, when these sharp intellects have an especial value.”

“You talk as if these men were *your* tools. Is it not just possible you may be *theirs*?” said she, impatiently.

“What monstrous absurdity is this, child!” replied he, angrily. “It is—it is downright——” he grew purple in the endeavour to find the right word—“downright Chartism!”

“If so, the Chartists have more of my sympathy than I was aware of.”

Fortunately for both, the sudden appearance of Dunn himself put an end to a discussion which each moment threatened to become perilous, and whose unpleasant effects were yet visible on their faces. Lord Glengariff had not sufficiently recovered his composure to do more than salute Mr. Dunn; while Lady Augusta’s confusion was even yet more marked. They had not walked many steps in company, when Lord Glengariff was recalled to the cottage by the visit of a neighbouring magistrate, and Lady Augusta found herself alone with Mr. Dunn.

“I am afraid, Lady Augusta,” said he, timidly, “my coming up was inopportune. I suspect I must have interrupted some confidential conversation.”

“No, nothing of the kind,” said she, frankly. “My father and I were discussing what we can never agree upon, and what every day seems to widen the breach of opinion between us; and I am well pleased that your arrival should have closed the subject.”

"I never meant to play eavesdropper, Lady Augusta," said he, earnestly; "but as I came up the grass alley, I heard my own name mentioned twice. Am I indiscreet in asking to what circumstance I owe the honour of engaging your attention?"

"I don't exactly know how to tell you," said she, blushing. "Not, indeed, but that the subject was one on which your own sentiments would be far more interesting than our speculations; but in repeating what passed between us, I might, perhaps, give an undue weight to opinions which merely came out in the course of conversation. In fact, Mr. Dunn," said she, hastily, "my father and I differ as to what should constitute the aristocracy of this kingdom, and from what sources it should be enlisted."

"And I was used as an illustration?" said Dunn, bowing low, but without the slightest trace of irritation. *

"You were," said she, in a low, but distinct voice.

"And," continued he, in the same quiet tone, "Lady Augusta Arden condescended to think and to speak more favourably of the class I belong to than the Earl her father. Well," cried he, with more energy of manner, "it is gratifying to me that I found the advocacy in the quarter that I wished it. I can well understand the noble Lord's prejudices; they are not very unreasonable; the very fact that they have taken centuries to mature, and that centuries have acquiesced in them, would give them no mean value. But I am also proud to think that you, Lady Augusta, can regard with generosity the claims of those beneath you. Remember, too," added he, "what a homage we render to your order when men like myself confess that wealth, power, and influence are all little compared with recognition by *you and yours*."

"Perhaps," said she, hesitatingly, "you affix a higher value on these distinctions than they merit."

"If you mean so far as they conduce to human happiness, I agree with you; but I was addressing myself solely to what are called the ambitions of life."

"I have the very greatest curiosity to know what are yours," said she, abruptly.

"Mine! mine!" said Dunn, stammering, and in deep confusion. "I have but one."

"Shall I guess it? Will you tell me, if I guess rightly?"

"I will, most faithfully."

"Your desire is, then, to be a Cabinet Minister; you want to be where the administrative talents you possess will have their fitting influence and exercise."

"No, not that!" sighed he, heavily.

"Mere title could never satisfy an ambition such as yours, of that I am certain," resumed she. "You wouldn't care for such an empty prize."

"And yet there is a title, Lady Augusta," said he, dropping his voice, which now faltered in every word—"there is a title to win which has been the guiding spirit of my whole life. In the days of my poverty and obscurity, as well as in the full noon of my success, it never ceased to be the goal of all my hopes. If I tremble at the presumption of even approaching this confession, I also feel the sort of desperate courage that animates him who has but one throw for fortune. Yes, Lady Augusta, such a moment as this may not again occur. I know you sufficiently well to feel that when one, even humble as I am, dares to avow——"

A quick step in the walk adjoining startled both, and they looked up. It was Sybella Kellett, who came up with a sealed packet in her hand.

"A despatch, Mr. Dunn," said she; "I have been in search of you all over the garden." He took it with a muttered "Thanks," and placed it unread in his pocket. Miss Kellett quickly saw that her presence was not desired, and with a hurried allusion to engagements, was moving away, when Lady Augusta said,

"Wait for me, Miss Kellett; Mr. Dunn must be given time for his letters, or he will begin to rebel against his captivity." And with this, she moved away.

"Pray don't go, Lady Augusta," said he. "I'm proof against business appeals to-day." But she was already out of hearing.

Amongst the secrets which Davenport Dunn had never succeeded in unravelling, ~~the~~ female heart was pre-eminently distinguished. The veriest young lady fresh from her governess or the boarding-school would have proved a greater puzzle to him than the most intricate statement of a finance minister. Whether Lady Augusta had fully comprehended his allusion, or whether, having understood it, she wished to evade the subject, and spare both herself and him the pain of any mortifying rejoinder, were now the difficult questions which he revolved over and over in his mind. In his utter ignorance of the sex, he endeavoured to solve the problem by the ordinary guidance of his reason, taking no account of womanly reserve and delicacy, still less of that "finesse" of intelligence which, with all the certainty of an instinct, can divine at once in what

channel feelings will run, and how their course can be most safely directed.

"She must have seen to what I pointed," said he, "I spoke out plainly enough—perhaps too plainly. Was that the mistake I made? Was my declaration too abrupt? and if so, was it likely she would not have uttered something like reproof? Her sudden departure might have this signification, as though to say, 'I will spare you any comment—I will seem even not to have apprehended you.' In the rank to which she pertains, I have heard, a chief study is, how much can be avoided of those rough allusions which grate upon inferior existences; how to make life calm and peaceful, divesting it so far as may be of the irritations that spring out of hasty words and heated tempers. In her high-bred nature, therefore, how possible is it that she would reason thus, and say, 'I will not hurt him by a direct refusal; I will not rebuke the presumption of his wishes. He will have tact enough to appreciate my conduct, and return to the topic no more!' And yet, how patiently she had heard me up to the very moment of that unlucky interruption. Without a conscious sense of encouragement I had never dared to speak as I did. Yes, assuredly she led me on to talk of myself and my ambitions as I am not wont to do. She went even further. She overcame objections which to myself had seemed insurmountable. She spoke to me like one taking a deep, sincere interest in my success; and was this feigned? or, if real, what meant it? After all, might not her manner be but another phase of that condescension with which her 'Order' listen to the plots and projects of inferior beings—something begotten of curiosity as much as of interest?"

In this fashion did he guess, and speculate, and question on a difficulty where even wiser heads have guessed, and speculated, and questioned just as vaguely.

At last he was reminded of the circumstance which had interrupted their converse—the despatch. He took it from his pocket and looked at the address and the seal, but never opened it, and with a kind of half-smile replaced it in his pocket.

CHAPTER LXIV.

THE TELEGRAPHIC DESPATCH.

WHEN Mr. Davenport Dunn entered the drawing-room before dinner on that day, his heart beat very quickly as he saw Lady Augusta Arden was there alone. In what spirit she remembered the scene of the morning—whether she felt resentment towards him for his presumption, was disposed to scoff down his pretensions, or to regard them, if not with favour, with at least forgiveness, were the themes on which his mind was yet dwelling. The affable smile with which she now met him did more to resolve these doubts than all his casuistry.

“Was it not very thoughtful of me,” said she, “to release you this morning, and suffer you to address yourself to the important things which claimed your attention? I really am quite vain of my self-denial.”

“And yet, Lady Augusta,” said he, in a low tone, “I had felt more flattered if you had been less mindful of the exigency, and been more interested in what I then was speaking of.”

“What a selfish speech,” said she, laughing. “Now that my forbearance has given you all the benefits it could confer, you turn round and say you are not grateful for it. I suppose,” added she, half pettishly, “the despatch was not very pressing after all, and that this was the cause of some disappointment.”

"I am unable to say," replied he, calmly.

"What do you mean? Surely, when you read it——"

"But I have not read it—there it is still, just as you saw it," said he, producing the packet with the seal unbroken.

"But really, Mr. Dunn," said she, and her face flushed up as she spoke, "this does not impress me with the wonderful aptitude for affairs men ascribe to you. Is it usual to treat these messages so cavalierly?"

"It never happened with me till this morning, Lady Augusta," said he, in the same low tone. "Carried away by an impulse which I will not try to account for, I had dared to speak to you of myself and of my future in a way that showed how eventful to both might prove the manner in which you heard me."

"Well, Dunn," cried Lord Glengariff, entering, "I suppose you have made a day of work of it; we have never seen you since breakfast."

"On the contrary, my Lord," replied he, in deep confusion, "I have taken my idleness in the widest sense. Never wrote a line—not looked into a newspaper."

"Wouldn't even open a telegraphic message which came to his hands this morning," said Lady Augusta, with a malicious drollery in her glance towards him.

"Incredible!" cried my Lord.

"Quite true, I assure your Lordship," said Dunn, in deeper confusion, and not knowing what turn to give his explanation.

"The fact is," broke in Lady Augusta, hurriedly, "Mr. Dunn was so implicit in his obedience to our prescription of perfect rest and repose, that he made it a point of honour not even to read a telegram without permission."

"I must say it is very flattering to us," said Lord Glengariff; "but now let us reward the loyalty, and let him see what his news is."

Dunn looked at Lady Augusta, who, with the very slightest motion of her head, gave consent, and he broke open the despatch.

Dunn crushed the paper angrily in his hand when he finished reading it, and muttered some low words of angry meaning.

"Nothing disagreeable, I trust?" asked his Lordship.

"Yes, my Lord, something even worse than disagreeable," said he; then flattening out the crumpled paper, he held it to him to read.

Lord Glengariff, putting on his spectacles, perused the document slowly, and then, turning towards Dunn, in a voice of deep

agitation, said, "This is very disastrous indeed; are you prepared for it?"

Without attending to the question, Dunn took the despatch from Lord Glengariff, and handed it to Lady Augusta.

"A run for gold!" cried she, suddenly. "An attempt to break the Ossory Bank! What does it all mean? Who are they that make this attack?"

"Opponents—some of them political, some commercial, a few, perhaps, men personally unfriendly—enemies of what they call my success!" and he sighed heavily on the last word. "Let me see," said he, slowly, after a pause; "to-day is Thursday—tomorrow will be the 28th—heavy payments are required for the Guatemala Trunk Line—something more than forty thousand pounds to be made up. The Parma Loan, second instalment, comes on the 30th."

"Dinner, my Lord," said a servant, throwing open the door.

"A thousand pardons, Lady Augusta," said Dunn, offering his arm. "I am really shocked at obtruding these annoyances upon your notice. You see, my Lord," added he, gaily, "one of the penalties of admitting the 'working men of life' into your society."

It was only as they passed on towards the dinner-room that Lord Glengariff noticed Miss Kellett's absence.

"She has a headache, or a cold, I believe," said Lady Augusta, carelessly; and they sat down to dinner.

So long as the servants were present the conversation ranged over commonplace events and topics, little indeed passing, since each seemed too deeply impressed with grave forebodings for much inclination for mere talking. Once alone—and Lord Glengariff took the earliest moment to be so—they immediately resumed the subject of the ill-omened despatch.

"You are, at all events, prepared, Dunn?" said the Earl; "this onslaught does not take you by surprise?"

"I am ashamed to say it does, my Lord," said he, with a painful smile. "I was never less suspicious of any malicious design upon me. I was, for the first time perhaps in all my life, beginning to feel strong in the consciousness that I had faithfully performed my allotted part in the world, advanced the great interests of my country and of humanity generally. This blow has, therefore, shocked me deeply."

"What a base ingratitude!" exclaimed Lady Augusta, indignantly.

"After all," said Dunn, generously, "let us remember that I

am not a fair judge in my own cause. Others have taken, it may be, another reading of my character; they may deem me narrow-minded, selfish, and ambitious. My very success—I am not going to deny it has been great—may have provoked its share of enmity. Why, the very vastness and extent of my projects were a sort of standing reproach to petty speculators and small scheme-mongers.”

“So that it has really come upon you unawares?” said the Earl, reverting to his former remark.

“Completely so, my Lord. The tranquil ease and happiness I have enjoyed under this roof—the first real holiday in a long life of toil—are the best evidences I can offer how little I could have anticipated such a stroke.”

“Still I fervently hope it will not prove more than inconvenience,” said he, feelingly.

“Not even so much, my Lord, as regards money. I cannot believe that the movement will be general. There is no panic in the country—rents are paid—prices remunerating—markets better than we have seen them for years; the sound sense and intelligence of the people will soon detect in this attack the prompting of some personal malice. In all likelihood a few thousands will meet the whole demand.”

“I am so glad to hear you say so!” said Lady Augusta, smiling. “Really, when I think of all our persuasions to detain you here, I never could acquit us of some sort of share in any disaster your delay might have occasioned.”

“Oh, Dunn would never connect his visit here with such consequences, I’m certain,” said the Earl.

“Assuredly not, my Lord,” said he; and as his eyes met those of Lady Augusta, he grew red, and felt confused.

“Are your people—your agents and men of business, I mean,” said the Earl, “equal to such an emergency as the present, or will they have to look to *you* for guidance and direction?”

“Merely to meet the demand for gold is a simple matter, my Lord,” said Dunn, “and does not require any effort of mind or forethought. To prevent the back-water of this rushing flood submerging and engulfing other banking-houses—to defend, in a word, the lines of our rivals and enemies—to save from the consequences of their recklessness the very men who have assailed us—these are weighty cares!”

“And are you bound in honour to take this trouble in their behalf?”

“No, my Lord, not in honour any more than in law, but

bound by the debt we owe to that commercial community by whose confidence we have acquired fortune. My position at the head of the great industrial movement in this country imposes upon me the great responsibility that 'no injury should befall the republic.' Against the insane attacks of party hate, factious violence, or commercial knavery, I am expected to do my duty, nay, more, I am expected to be provided with means to meet whatever emergency may arise—defeat this scheme—expose that—denounce the other. Am I wrong in calling these weighty cares?"

Self-glorification was not usually one of Davenport Dunn's weaknesses—indeed, "self," in any respect, was not a theme on which he was disposed to dwell—and yet now, for reasons which may better be suspected than alleged, he talked in a spirit of even vain exultation of his plans, his station, and his influence. If it was something to display before the Peer claims to national respect, which, if not so ancient, were scarcely less imposing than his own, it was more pleasing still to dilate upon a theme to which the Peer's daughter listened so eagerly. It was, besides, a grand occasion to exhibit the vast range of resources, the wide-spread influences, and far-reaching sympathies of the great commercial man, to show him, not the mere architect of his own fortune, but the founder of a nation's prosperity. While he thus held forth, and in a strain to which fervour had lent a sort of eloquence, a servant entered with another despatch.

"Oh! I trust this brings you better news," cried Lady Augusta, eagerly; and as he broke the envelope, he thanked her with a grateful look.

"Well?" interposed she, anxiously, as he gazed at the lines without speaking—"well?"

"Just as I said," muttered Dunn, in a deep and suppressed voice—"a systematic plot—a deep-laid scheme against me."

"Is it still about the Bank?" asked the Earl, whose interest had been excited by the tenor of the recent conversation.

"Yes, my Lord; they insist on making me out a bubble speculator—an adventurer—a Heaven knows what of duplicity and intrigue. I would simply ask them: 'Is the wealth with which this same Davenport Dunn has enriched you, real, solid, and tangible? are the guineas mint-stamped? are the shares true representatives of value?' But why do I talk of these people? If they render me no gratitude, they owe me none—my aims were higher and greater than ever *they* or *their* interests comprehended." From the haughty defiance of his tone, his

voice fell suddenly to a low and quick key, as he said: "This message informs me that the demand upon the Ossory to-morrow will be a great concerted movement. Barnard, the man I myself returned last election for the borough, is to head it; he has canvassed the county for holders of our notes, and such is the panic, that the magistrates have sent for an increased force of police, and two additional companies of infantry. My man of business asks, 'What is to be done?'"

"And what *is* to be done?" asked the Earl.

"Meet it, my Lord. Meet the demand as our duty requires us."

There was a calm dignity in the manner Dunn spoke the words that had its full effect upon the Earl and his daughter. They saw this "man of the people" display, in a moment of immense peril, an amount of cool courage that no dissimulation could have assumed. As they could, and did indeed say afterwards, when relating the incident, "We were sitting at the dessert, chatting away freely about one thing or another, when the confirmed tidings arrived by telegraph that an organised attack was to be made against his credit by a run for gold. You should really have seen him," said Lady Augusta, "to form any idea of the splendid composure he manifested. The only thing like emotion he exhibited was a sort of haughty disdain, a proud pity, for men who should have thus requited the great services he had been rendering to the country."

It is but just to own that he did perform his part well; he acted it, too, as theatrical critics would say, "chastely," that is, there was no rant, no exaggeration—not a trait too much, not a tint too strong.

"I wish I knew of any way to be of service to you in this emergency, Dunn," said the Earl, as they returned to the drawing-room; "I'm no capitalist, nor have I a round sum at my command——"

"My dear Lord," broke in Dunn, with much feeling, "of money I can command whatever amount I want. Baring, Hope, Rothschild, any of them would assist me with millions, if I needed them, to-morrow, which happily, however, I do not. There is still a want which they cannot supply, but which, I am proud to say, I have no longer to fear. The kind sympathy of your Lordship and Lady Augusta has laid me under an obligation ——" Here Mr. Dunn's voice faltered; the Earl grasped his hand with a generous clasp, and Lady Augusta carried her handkerchief to her eyes as she averted her head.

"What a pack of hypocrites!" cries our reader, in disgust. No, not so. There was a dash of reality through all this deceit. They *were* moved—their own emotions, the tones of their own voices, the workings of their own natures, *had* stirred some amount of honest sentiment in their hearts; how far it was alloyed by less worthy feeling, to what extent fraud and trickery mingled there, we are not going to tell you—perhaps we could not, if we would.

"You mean to go over to Kilkenny, then, to-morrow, Dunn?" asked his Lordship, after a painful pause.

"Yes, my Lord, my presence is indispensable."

"Will you allow Lady Augusta and myself to accompany you? I believe and trust that men like myself have not altogether lost the influence they once used to wield in this country, and I am vain enough to imagine I may be useful."

"Oh, my Lord, this overwhelms me!" said Dunn, and covered his eyes with his hand.

CHAPTER LXV.

"THE RUN FOR GOLD."

THE great Ossory Bank, with its million sterling of paid-up capital, its royal charter, its titled directory, and its shares at a premium, stood at the top of Patrick-street, Kilkenny, and looked, in the splendour of its plate-glass windows and the security of its iron railings, the very type of solvency and safety. The country squire ascended the hall-door steps with a sort of feeling of acquaintanceship, for he had known the Viscount who once lived there in days before the Union, and the farmer experienced a sense of trustfulness in depositing his hard-earned gains in what he regarded as a temple of Croesus. What an air of prosperity and business did the interior present! The massive doors swung noiselessly at the slightest touch, meet emblem of the secrecy that prevailed, and the facility that pervaded all transactions, within. What alacrity, too, in that numerous band of clerks, who counted, and cashed, and chequed, unceasingly! How calmly they passed from desk to desk, a word, a mere whisper, serving for converse; and then what a grand and mysterious solemnity about that back office with its double doors, within which some venerable cashier, bald-headed and pursy, stole at intervals to consult the oracle who dwelt within! In the spacious apartment devoted to cash operations, nothing denoted the former destiny of the mansion but a large fireplace, with a pretentious chimney-piece of black oak, over which a bust of our gracious Queen now figured, an object of wonderment and veneration to many a frieze-coated gazer.

On the morning of the 12th August, to which day we have brought our present history, the street in front of the Bank presented a scene of no ordinary interest. From an early hour

people continued to pour in, till the entire way was choked up with carriages and conveyances of every description, from the well-equipped barouche of the country gentleman to the humblest "shandradan" of the petty farmer. Sporting-looking fellows upon high-conditioned thorough-breds, ruddy old squires upon cobs, and hard-featured country folk upon shaggy ponies, were all jammed up together amidst a dense crowd of foot passengers. A strong police force was drawn up in front of the Bank, although nothing in the appearance of the assembled mass seemed to denote the necessity for their presence. A low murmur of voices ran through the crowd as each talked to his neighbour, consulting, guessing, and speculating, as temperament inclined; some were showing placards and printed notices they had received through the post—some pointed to newspaper paragraphs—others displayed great rolls of notes—but all talked with a certain air of sadness that appeared to presage coming misfortune. As ten o'clock drew nigh, the hour for opening the Bank, the excitement rose to a painful pitch; every eye was directed to the massive door, whose gorgeous brass knocker shone with a sort of insolent brilliancy in the sun. At every moment watches were consulted, and in muttered whispers men broke their fears to those beside them. Some could descry the heads of people moving about in the cash-office, where a considerable bustle appeared to prevail, and even this much of life seemed to raise the spirits of the crowd, and the rumour ran quickly on every side that the Bank was about to open. At last, the deep bell of the Town-hall struck ten. At each fall of the hammer all expected to see the door move, but it never stirred; and now the pent-up feeling of the multitude might be marked in a sort of subdued growl—a low, ill-boding sound, that seemed to come out of the very earth. As if to answer the unspoken anger of the crowd—a challenge accepted ere given—a heavy crash was heard, and the police proceeded to load with ball in the face of the people—a demonstration whose significance there was no mistaking. A cry of angry defiance burst from the assembled mass at the sight, but as suddenly was checked again as the massive door was seen to move, and then, with a loud bang, fly wide open. The rush was now tremendous. With some vague impression that everything depended upon being amongst the first, the people poured in with all the force of a mighty torrent. Each, fighting his way as if for life itself, regardless of the cries of suffering about him, strove to get forward; nor could all the efforts of the police avail to restrain them in the slightest.

Bleeding, wounded, half-suffocated, with bruised faces and clothes torn to tatters, they struggled on—no deference to age, no respect to condition. It was a fearful anarchy, where every thought of the past was lost in the present emergency. On they poured, breathless and bloody, with gleaming eyes and faces of demoniacal meaning; they pushed, they jostled, and they tore, till the first line gained the counter, against which the force behind now threatened to crush them to death.

What a marvellous contrast to the storm-tossed multitude, steaming and disfigured, was the calm attitude of the clerks within the counter! Not deigning, as it seemed, to bestow a glance upon the agitated scene before them, they moved placidly about, pen behind the ear, in voices of ordinary tone asking what each wanted, and counting over the proffered notes with all the impassiveness of every-day habit. "Gold for these, did you say?" they repeated, as though any other demand met the ear! Why, the very air rang with the sound, and the walls gave back the cry. From the wild voice of half-maddened recklessness to the murmur that broke from fainting exhaustion, there was but one word—"Gold!" A drowning crew, as the surging waves swept over them, never screamed for succour with wilder eagerness than did that tangled mass shout, "Gold, gold!"

In their savage energy, they could scarcely credit that their demands should be so easily complied with; they were half-stupified at the calm indifference that met their passionate appeal. They counted and recounted the glittering pieces over and over, as though some trick were to be apprehended—some deception to be detected. When drawn or pulled back from the counter by others eager as themselves, they might be seen in corners counting over their money, and reckoning it once more. It was so hard to believe that all their terrors were for nothing—their worst fears without a pretext. Even yet they couldn't imagine but that the supply must soon run short, and they kept asking those that came away whether they, too, had got their gold. Hour after hour rolled on, and still the same demand, and still the same unbroken flow of the yellow tide continued. Some very large cheques had been presented, but no sooner was their authenticity acknowledged than they were paid. An agent from another bank arrived with a formidable roll of "Ossory" notes, but was soon seen issuing forth with two bursting little bags of sovereigns. Notwithstanding all this, the pressure never ceased for a moment—nay, as the day wore on, the crowds seemed to

have grown denser and more importunate, and when the half-exhausted clerks claimed a few minutes' respite for a biscuit and a glass of wine, a cry of impatience burst from the insatiable multitude. It was three o'clock. In another hour the Bank would close, as many surmised, never to open again. It was evident, from the still increasing crowd and the excitement that prevailed, how little confidence the ready payments of the Bank had diffused. They who came forth loaded with gold were regarded as fortunate, while they who still waited for their turn were in all the feverish torture of uncertainty.

A little after three the crowd was cleft open by the passage of a large travelling barouche, which, with four steaming posters, advanced slowly through the dense mass.

"Who comes here with an earl's coronet?" said a gentleman to his neighbour, as the carriage passed. "Lord Glengariff, and Davenport Dunn himself, by George!" cried he, suddenly.

The words were as quickly caught up by those at either side, and the news, "Davenport Dunn has arrived," ran through the immense multitude. If there was an eager, almost intense, anxiety to catch a glimpse of him, there was still nothing that could indicate in the slightest degree the state of popular feeling towards him. Slightly favourable it might possibly have been, inasmuch as a faint effort at a cheer burst forth at the announcement of his name, but it was repressed just as suddenly, and it was in a silence almost awful that he descended from the carriage at the private door of the Bank.

"Do, I beg of you, Mr. Dunn," said Lady Augusta, as he stood to assist her to alight, "let me entreat of you not to think of us. We can be most comfortably accommodated at the hotel."

"By all means, Dunn. I insist upon it," broke in the Earl.

"In declining my poor hospitality, my Lord," said Dunn, "you will grieve me much, while you will also favour the impression that I am not in a condition to offer it."

"Ah! quite true—very justly observed. Dunn is perfectly right, Augusta. We ought to stop here." And he descended at once, and gave his hand to his daughter.

Lady Augusta turned about ere she entered the house, and looked at the immense crowd before her. There was something of almost resentfulness in the haughty gaze she bestowed; but, let us own, the look, whatever it implied, well became her proud features, and more than one was heard to say, "What a handsome woman she is!"

This little incident in the day's proceedings gave rise to much conjecture, some auguring that events must be grave and menacing when Dunn's own presence was required, others inferring that he came to give assurance and confidence to the Bank. Nor was the appearance of Lord Glengariff less open to its share of surmise, and many were the inquiries how far he was personally interested—whether he was a large stock-holder of the concern, or deep in its books as debtor. Leaving the speculative minds who discussed the subject without doors, let us follow Mr. Dunn, as, with Lady Augusta on his arm, he led the way to the drawing-room.

The rooms were handsomely furnished, that to the back opening upon a conservatory filled with rich geraniums, and ornamented with a pretty marble fountain, now in full play. Indeed, so well had Dunn's orders been attended to, that the apartments which he scarcely occupied for above a day or so in a twelvemonth had actually assumed the appearance of being in constant use. Books, prints, and newspapers were scattered out, fresh flowers stood in the vases, and recent periodicals lay on the tables.

"What a charming house!" exclaimed Lady Augusta; and really the approbation was sincere, for the soft-cushioned sofas, the perfumed air, the very quiet itself, were in delightful contrast to the heat and discomfort of a journey by "rail."

It was in vain Dunn entreated his noble guests to accept some luncheon; they peremptorily refused, and, in fact, declared that they would only remain there on the condition that he bestowed no further thought upon them, addressing himself entirely to the weighty cares around him.

"Will you at least tell me at what hour you'd like dinner, my Lord? Shall we say six?"

"With all my heart. Only, once more, I beg, never think of us. We are most comfortable here, and want for nothing."

With a deep bow of obedience, Dunn moved towards the door, when suddenly Lady Augusta whispered a few rapid words in her father's ear.

"Stop a moment, Dunn!" cried the Earl. "Augusta is quite right. The observation is genuine woman's wit. She says, I ought to go down along with you, to show myself in the Bank; that my presence there will have a salutary effect. Eh, what d'ye think?"

"I am deeply indebted to Lady Augusta for the suggestion," said Dunn, colouring highly. "There cannot be a doubt that

your Lordship's countenance and support at such a moment are priceless."

"I'm glad you think so—glad she thought of it," muttered the Earl, as he arranged his white locks before the glass, and made a sort of hasty toilet for his approaching appearance in public.

To judge from the sensation produced by the noble Lord's appearance in the Bank, Lady Augusta's suggestion was admirable. The arrival of a waggon-load of bullion could scarcely have caused a more favourable impression. If Noah had been an Englishman, the dove would have brought him not an olive-branch but a Lord. I say it in no spirit of sarcasm or sneer—for, *cæteris paribus*, Lords are better company than Commoners; I merely record it passingly, as a strong trait of our people and our race. So was it now, that from the landed gentleman to the humblest tenant-farmer, the Earl's presence seemed a fresh guarantee of solvency. Many remarked that Dunn looked pale—some thought anxious—but all agreed that the hearty-faced, white-haired old nobleman at his side was a perfect picture of easy self-satisfaction.

They took their seats in the cash-office, within the counter, to be seen by all, and see everything that went forward. If Davenport Dunn regarded the scene with a calm and unmoved indifference, his attention being, in fact, more engrossed by his newspaper than by what went on around, Lord Glenigariff's quick eye and ear were engaged incessantly. He scanned the appearance of each new applicant as he came up to the table,—he listened to his demand, noted its amount, and watched with piercing glance what effect it might produce on the cashier. Nor was he an unmoved spectator of the scene, for while he simply contented himself with an angry stare at the frieze-coated peasant, he actually scowled an insolent defiance when any of higher rank or more pretentious exterior presented himself, muttering in broken accents beneath his breath, "Too bad, too bad!" "Gross ingratitude!" "A perfect disgrace!" and so on.

He was at the very climax of his indignation, when a voice from the crowd addressed him with, "How d'ye do, my Lord? I was not aware you were in this part of the country."

He put up his double eye-glass, and speedily recognised the Mr. Barnard whom Dunn mentioned as so unworthily requiting all he had done for him.

"No, Sir," said the Earl, haughtily; "and just as little did I

expect to see you here on such an errand as this. In *my* day, country gentlemen were the first to give the example of trust and confidence, and not foremost in propagating unworthy apprehensions."

"I'm not a partner in the Bank, my Lord, and know nothing of its solvency," said the other, as he handed in two cheques over the counter.

"Eight thousand six hundred and forty eight. Three thousand, twelve, nine, six," said the clerk, mechanically. "How will you have it, Sir?"

"Bank of Ireland notes will do."

Dunn lifted his eyes from the paper, and then, raising his hat, saluted Mr. Barnard.

"I trust you left Mrs. Barnard well?" said he, in a calm voice.

"Yes, thank you—well—quite well?" said Barnard, in some confusion.

"Will you remember to tell her that she shall have the acorns of the Italian pines next week. I have heard of their arrival at the Custom-house."

While Barnard muttered a very confused expression of thanks, the old Earl looked from one to the other of the speakers in a sort of bewilderment. Where was the angry indignation he had looked for from Dunn?—where the haughty denunciation of a black ingratitude.

"Why, Dunn, I say," whispered he, "isn't this Barnard the fellow you spoke of—the man you returned to Parliament t'other day?"

"The same, my Lord," replied Dunn, in a low cautious voice. "He is here exacting a right—a just right—and no more. It is not now, nor in this place, that I would remind him how ungraciously he has treated me. This day is *his*. *Mine* will come yet."

Before Lord Glengariff could well recover from the astonishment of this cold and calculating patience, Mr. Hanks pushed his way through the crowd, with an open letter in his hand.

It was a telegram just received, with an account of an attack made by the mob on Mr. Dunn's house in Dublin. Like all such communications, the tidings were vague and unsatisfactory: "A terrific attack by mob on No. 18. Windows smashed, and front door broken, but not forced. Police repulsed; military sent for."

"So much for popular gratitude, my Lord," said Dunn, as he

handed the slip of paper to the Earl. "Fortunately, it was never the prize on which I had set my heart. Mr. Hanks," said he, in a bland, calm voice, "the crowd seems scarcely diminished outside. Will you kindly affix a notice on the door, to state that, to convenience the public, the Bank will on this day continue open till five o'clock?"

"By Heaven! they don't deserve such courtesy!" cried the old Lord, passionately. "Be as just as you please, but show them no generosity. If it be thus they treat the men who devote their best energies—their very lives—to the country, I, for one, say it is not a land to live in, and I spurn them as countrymen!"

"What would you have, my Lord? The best troops have turned and fled under the influence of a panic—the magic words, 'We are mined!' once routed the very column that had stormed a breach! You don't expect to find the undisciplined masses of mankind more calmly courageous than the veterans of a hundred fights."

A wild hoarse cheer burst forth in the street at this moment, and drowned all other sounds.

"What is it now? Are they going to attack us here?" cried the Earl.

The cry again arose, louder and wilder, and the shouts of "Dunn for ever! Dunn for ever!" burst from a thousand voices.

"The placard has given great satisfaction, Sir," said Hanks, re-appearing. "Confidence is fully restored."

And truly it was strange to see how quickly a popular sentiment spread its influence, for they who now came forward to exchange their notes for gold no longer wore the sturdy air of defiance of the earlier applicants, but approached half reluctantly, and with an evident sense of shame, as though yielding to an ignoble impulse of cowardice and fear. The old Earl's haughty stare and insolent gaze were little calculated to rally the diffident; for with his double eye-glass he scanned each new comer with the air of a man saying, "I mark, and I'll not forget you!"

What a contrast was Dunn's expression—that look, so full of gentle pity and forgiveness! Nothing of anger, no resentfulness, disfigured the calm serenity of his pale features. He had a word of recognition—even a smile and a kind inquiry—for some of those who now bashfully tried to screen themselves from notice. The great rush was already over; a visible change had come over that vast multitude who so lately clamoured

aloud for gold. The very aspect of that calm, unmoved face was a terrible rebuke to their unworthy terror.

"It's nigh over, Sir," whispered Hankses to his chief, as he stood with his massive gold watch in the hollow of his hand. "Seven hundred only have been paid out in the last twelve minutes. The battle is finished!"

The vociferous cheering without continued unceasingly, and yells for Dunn to come forth and show himself filled the air.

"Do you hear them?" asked Lord Glengariff, looking eagerly at Dunn.

"Yes, my Lord. It is a very quick reaction. Popular opinion is generally correct in the main; but it is rare to find it reversing its own judgments so suddenly."

"Very dispassionately spoken, Sir," said the old Lord, haughtily; "but what if you had been unprepared for this onslaught to-day?—what if they had succeeded in compelling you to suspend payments?"

"Had such been possible, my Lord, we would have richly deserved any reverse that might have befallen us. What is it, Hankses?" cried he, as that gentleman endeavoured to get near him.

"You'll have to show yourself, Sir—you must positively address them in a few words from the balcony."

"I do not think so, Hankses. This is a mere momentary burst of popular feeling."

"Not at all, Sir. Listen to them now—they are shouting madly for you. To decline the call will be taken as pride. I implore you to come out, if only for a few minutes."

"I suppose he is right, Dunn," said Lord Glengariff, half doggedly. "For my own part, I have not the slightest pretension to say how popular demonstrations—I believe that is the word for them—are to be treated. Street gatherings, in my day, were called mobs, and dispersed by horse police; our newer civilisation parleys to them and flatters them. I suppose you understand the requirements of the times we live in."

The clamour outside was now deafening, and by its tone seemed in sort to justify what Hankses had said, that's Dunn's indifference to their demands would be construed into direct insult.

"Do it at once!" cried Hankses, eagerly, "or it will be too late. A few words spoken now will save us thirty thousand pounds to-morrow."

This whisper in Dunn's ear decided the question, and turning

to the Earl, he said, "I believe, my Lord, Mr. Hanks is right—I ought to show myself."

"Come along, then," said the old Lord, heartily; and he took his arm with an air that said, "I'll stand by you throughout."

Scarcely had Dunn entered the drawing-room, than Lady Augusta met him, her cheek flushed and her eyes flashing. "I am *so* glad," cried she, "that you are going to address them. It is a proud moment for you."

When the window opened, and Davenport Dunn appeared on the balcony, the wild roar of the multitude made the air tremble, for the cry was taken up by others in remote streets, and came echoing back again and again. I have heard that consummate orators—men practised in all the arts of public speaking—have acknowledged that there is no such severe test, in the way of audience, as that mixed assemblage called a mob, wherein every class has its representative, and every gradation its type. Now Dunn was not a great public speaker. The few sentences he was obliged to utter on the occasions of his health being drunk, cost him no uncommon uneasiness; he spoke them usually with faltering accents and much diffidence. It happens, however, that the world is often not displeased at these small signs of confusion—these little defects in oratorical readiness—in men of acknowledged ability, and even prefer them to the rapid flow and voluble ease of more practised orators. There is, so to say, a mock air of sincerity in the professions of a man whose feelings seem fuller than his words,—something that implies the heart to be in the right place, though the tongue be but a poor exponent of its sentiments; and lastly, the world is always ready to accept the embarrassment of the speaker as an evidence of the grateful emotions that are swaying him. Hence the success of country gentlemen in the House—hence the hearty cheers that follow the rambling discursiveness of bucolic eloquence!

If Mr. Dunn was not an orator, he was a keen and shrewd observer, and one fact he had noticed, which was, that the shouts and cries of popular assemblages are to an indifferent speaker pretty much what an accompaniment is to a bad singer—the aids by which he surmounts difficult passages and conceals his false notes. Mr. Hanks, too, well understood how to lead this orchestra, and had already taken his place on the steps of the door beneath.

Dunn stood in front of the balcony, Lord Glengariff at his side and a little behind him. With one hand pressed upon his

heart, he bowed deeply to the multitude. "My kind friends," said he, in a low voice, but which was audible to a great distance, "it has been my fortune to have received at different times of my life gratifying assurances of sympathy and respect, but never in the whole course of a very varied career do I remember an occasion so deeply gratifying to my feelings as the present. (Cheers, that lasted ten minutes and more.) It is not," resumed he, with more energy—"it is not at a moment like this, surrounded by brave and warm hearts, when the sentiments of affection that sway *you* are mingled with the emotions of my own breast, that I would take a dark or gloomy view of human nature, but truth compels me to say that the attack made this day upon my credit—for *I* am the Ossory Bank—(loud and wild cheering)—yes, I repeat it, for the stability of this institution *I* am responsible by all I possess in this world. Every share, every guinea, every acre I own are here! Far from me to impute ungenerous or unworthy motives to any quarter; but, my worthy friends, there has been foul play—(groans)—there has been treachery—(deeper groans)—and my name is not Davenport Dunn but it shall be exposed and punished. (Cries of "More power to ye," and hearty cheers, greeted this solemn assurance.)

"I am, as you are well aware, and I glory in declaring it, one of yourselves. (Here the enthusiasm was tremendous.) By moderate abilities, hard work, and unflinching honesty—for that is the great secret—I have become what you see me to-day! (Loud cheering.) If there be amongst you any who aspire to my position, I tell him that nothing is easier than to attain it. I was a poor scholar—you know what a poor scholar is—when the generous nobleman you see now at my side first noticed me. (Three cheers for the Lord were proposed and given most heartily.) His generous patronage gave me my first impulse in life. I soon learned how to do the rest. ("That ye did;" "More power and success to ye," here ran through the mob.) Now, it was at the table of that noble Lord—enjoying the first real holiday in thirty years of toil—that I received a telegraphic despatch, informing me there would be a run for gold upon this Bank before the week was over. I vow to you I did not believe it. I spurned the tidings as a base calumny upon the people, and as I handed the despatch to his Lordship to read, I said, if this be possible—and I doubt it much—it is the treacherous intrigue of an enemy, not the spontaneous movement of the public. (Here Lord Glengariff bowed and

acquiescence to the statement, a condescension on his part that speedily called for three vociferous cheers for "the Lord," once more.)

"I am no lawyer," resumed Dunn, with vigour—"I am a plain man of the people, whose head was never made for subtleties; but this I tell you, that if it be competent for me to offer a reward for the discovery of those who have hatched this conspiracy, my first care will be on my return to Dublin to propose ten thousand pounds for such information as may establish their guilt! (Cheering for a long time followed these words.) They knew that they could not break the Bank—in their hearts they knew that our solvency was as complete as that of the Bank of England itself—but they thought that by a panic, and by exciting popular feeling against me, I, in my pride of heart and my conscious honesty, might be driven to some indignant reaction; that I might turn round and say, Is this the country I have slaved for? Are these the people for whose cause I have neglected personal advancement, and disregarded the flatteries of the great? Are these the rewards of days of labour and nights of anxiety and fatigue? They fancied, possibly, that, goaded by what I might have construed into black ingratitude, I would say, like Coriolanus, 'I banish you!' But they little knew either you or me, my warm-hearted friends! (Deafening cheers.) They little knew that the well-grounded confidence of a nation cannot be obliterated by the excitement of a moment. A panic in the commercial, like a thunder-storm in the physical world, only leaves the atmosphere lighter, and the air fresher than before; and so I say to you, we shall all breathe more freely when we rise to-morrow—no longer to see the dark clouds overhead, nor hear the rumbling sounds that betoken coming storm.

"I have detained you too long. ("No, no!" vociferously broke forth.) I have spoken also too much about myself. ("Not a bit; we could listen to ye till mornin'," shouted a wild voice, that drew down hearty laughter.) But before I go, I wish to say, that, hard pressed as we are in the Bank—sorely inconvenienced by the demands upon us—I am yet able to ask your excellent Mayor to accept of five hundred pounds from me for the poor of this city—(what a yell followed this announcement! plainly indicating what a personal interest the tidings seemed to create)—and to add—(loud cheers)—and to add—(more cheers)—and to add," cried he, in his deepest voice, "that the first toast I will drink this day shall be, The Boys of Kilkenny!"

It is but justice to add, that Mr. Dunn's speech was of that

class of oratory that "hears" better than it reads, while his audience was also less critically disposed than may be our valued reader. At all events, it achieved a great success; and within an hour after its delivery, hawkers cried through the streets of the city, "The Full and True Account of the Run for Gold, with Mr. Dunn's Speech to the People;" and, sooth to say, that though the paper was not "cream laid," and though many of the letters were upside down, the literature had its admirers, and was largely read. Later on, the city was illuminated, two immense letters of D. D. figuring in colored lamps in front of the Town-hall, while copious libations of whisky-punch were poured forth in honour of the Man of the People. In every rank and class, from the country gentleman who dined at the club-house, to the smallest chop-house in John-street, there was but one sentiment—that Dunn was a fine fellow, and his enemies downright scoundrels. If a few of nicer taste and more correct feeling were not exactly pleased with his speech, they wisely kept their opinions to themselves, and let "the Ayes have it," who pronounced it to be manly—aboveboard—modest, and so forth.

Throughout the entire evening, Mr. Hankes was everywhere, personally or through his agents; his care was to collect public sentiment, to ascertain what popular opinion thought of the whole events of the morning, and to promote, so far as he could with safety, the flattering estimate already formed of his chief. Scarcely half an hour elapsed without Dunn's receiving from his indefatigable lieutenant some small scrap of paper, with a few words hastily scrawled, in this fashion:

"Rice and Walsh's, Nine o'clock.—Company in the coffee-room enthusiastic; talk of a public dinner; some propose portrait in Town-hall."

"A quarter to Ten, Judy's, Rose Inn-street.—Comic song, with a chorus:

"If for gold ye run,
Says the Shan van Voght;
If for gold ye run,
I'll send for Davy Dunn,
He's the boy to show ye fun,
Says the Shan van Voght!"

"Eleven o'clock, High-street.—Met the Dean, who says, 'D. D. is an honour to us; we are all proud of him.' The county your own when you want it."

"Twelve o'clock.—If any one should venture to ask for gold to-morrow, he will be torn to pieces by the mob."

Assuredly it was a triumph; and every time that the wild cheers from the crowds in the street broke in upon the converse in the drawing-room, Lady Augusta's eyes would sparkle as she said, "I don't wonder at your feeling proud of it all!"

And he *did* feel proud of it. Strange as it may seem, he was as proud as though the popularity had been earned by the noblest actions and the most generous devotion. We are not going to say why or wherefore this. And now for a season we take our leave of him to follow the fortunes of some others whose fate we seem to have forgotten. We have the less scruple for deserting Davenport Dunn at this moment, that we leave him happy, prospering, and in good company.

CHAPTER LXVI.

A NOTE FROM DAVIS.

AM I asking too much of my esteemed reader, if I beg of him to remember where and how I last left the Honourable Annesley Beecher? for it is to that hopeful individual and his fortunes I am now about to return.

If it be wearisome to the reader to have his attention suddenly drawn from the topic before him, and his interest solicited for those he has well-nigh forgotten, let me add that it is almost as bad for the writer, who is obliged to hasten hither and thither, and, like a huntsman with a straggling pack, to urge on the tardy, correct the loiterer, and repress the eager.

When we parted with Annesley Beecher, he was in sore trouble and anxiety of mind; a conviction was on him that he was "squared," "nobbled," "crossed," "potted," or something to the like intent and with a like euphonious designation. "The Count and Spicer were conspiring to put him in a hole!" As if any "hole" could be as dark, as hopeless, and as deep as the dreary pitfall of his own helpless nature!

His only resource seemed flight: to break cover at once and run for it, appeared the solitary solution of the difficulty. There was many a spot in the map of Europe which offered a sanctuary against Grog Davis. But what if Grog were to set the law in motion, where should he seek refuge then? Some one had once mentioned to him a country with which no treaty connected us with regard to criminals. It began, if he remembered aright, with an S; was it Sardinia, or Sweden, or Spain, or Sicily, or Switzerland? It was surely one of them, but which? "What a mass of rubbish, to be sure," thought he, "they crammed me with at Rugby, but not one solitary particle of what one could

call useful learning. See now, for instance, what benefit a bit of geography might be to me!" And he rambled on in his mind, concocting an educational scheme which would really fit a man for the wear and tear of life.

It was thus reflecting he entered the inn and mounted to his room; his clothes lay scattered about, drawers were crammed with his wearables, and the table covered with a toilet equipage, costly, and not yet paid for. Who was to pack all these? Who was to make up that one portmanteau which would suffice for flight, including all the indispensable, and rejecting the superfluous? There is a case recorded of a Frenchman who was diverted from his resolve on suicide by discovering that his pistols were not loaded, and, incredible as it may seem, Beecher was deterred from his journey by the thought of how he was to pack his trunk. He had never done so much for himself since he was born, and he didn't think he could do it; at all events, he wasn't going to try. Certain superstitious people are impressed with the notion that making a will is a sure prelude to dying; so others there are who fancy that, by the least effort on their own behalf, they are forecasting a state of poverty in which they must actually work for subsistence.

How hopelessly, then, did he turn over costly waistcoats and embroidered shirts, gaze on richly-cut and crested essence-bottles and boot-boxes, whose complexity resembled mathematical instruments. In what manner they were ever conveyed so far he could not imagine. The room seemed actually filled with them. It was Rivers had "put them up," but Rivers could no longer be trusted, for he was evidently in the "lay" against him.

He sighed heavily at this: it was a dreary, hopeless sigh over the depravity of the world and mankind in general. "And what a paradise it might be," he thought, "if people would only let themselves be cheated quietly and peaceably, neither threatening with their solicitors, nor menacing with the police. Heaven knew how little he asked for: a safe thing now and then on the Derby—a good book on the Oaks; he wanted no more! He bore no malice nor ill-will to any man breathing; he never wished to push any fellow to the wall. If ever there was a generous heart it beat in *his* bosom, and if the world only knew the provocation he had received! No matter, he would never retaliate—he'd die game—be a brick to the last;" and twenty other fine things of the same sort that actually brought the tears to his own eyes over his own goodness.

Goodness, however, will not pack a trunk, nor will moral

qualities, however transcendent, fold cravats and dress-coats, and he looked very despondently around him, and thought over what he half fancied was the only thing he couldn't do. So accustomed had he been of late to seek Lizzy Davis's counsel in every moment of difficulty, that actually, without knowing it, he descended now to the drawing-room, some vague, undefined feeling impelling him to be near her.

She was singing at the piano, all alone, as he entered; the room, as usual, brilliantly lighted up as if to receive company, rare flowers and rich plants grouped tastefully about, and "Daisy"—for she looked that name on this occasion—in one of those charming "toilettes" whose consummate skill it is to make the most costly articles harmonise into something that seems simplicity itself. She wore a fuchsia in her hair, and another—only this last was of coral and gold elaborately and beautifully designed—on the front of her dress, and, except these, nothing more of ornament.

"Tutore mio," said she, gaily, as he entered, "you have treated me shamefully; for first of all, you were engaged to drive with me to the Kreutz Berg, and secondly, to take me to the Opera, and now, at half-past nine, you make your appearance. How is this, Monsieur? Expliquez vous."

"Shall I tell the truth?" said he.

"By all means, if anything so strange shouldn't embarrass you."

"Well, then, I forgot all about both the drive and the Opera. It's all very well to laugh," said he, in a tone of half pique; "young ladies, with no weightier cares on their hearts than whether they ought to wear lilac or green, have very little notion of a man's anxieties. They fancy that life is a thing of white and red roses, soft music and bouquets—but it ain't."

"Indeed! are you quite sure?" asked she, with an air of extreme innocence.

"I suspect I am," said he, confidently; "and there's not many a man about town knows more of it than I do."

"And now, what may be the cares, or rather, for I don't want to be curious, what sort of cares are they that oppress that dear brain? Have you got any wonderful scheme for the amelioration of mankind to which you see obstacles? Are your views in politics obstructed by ignorance or prejudice? Have you grand notions about art for which the age is not ripe? or are you actually the author of a wonderful poem that nobody has had taste enough to appreciate?"

"And these are your ideas of mighty anxieties, Miss Lizzy?" said he, in a tone of compassionate pity. "By Jove! how I'd like to have nothing heavier on my heart than the whole load of them."

"I think you have already told me you never were crossed in love?"

"Well, nothing serious, you know. A scratch or so, as one may say, getting through the bushes, but never a cropper—nothing like a regular smash."

"It would seem to me, then, that you have enjoyed a singularly fortunate existence, and been just as lucky in life as myself."

Beecher started at the words. What a strange chaos did they create within him! There is no tracing the thoughts that came, and went, and lost themselves in that poor bewildered head. The nearest to anything like consistency was the astonishment he felt that she—Grog Davis's daughter—should ever imagine she had drawn a prize in the world's lottery.

"Yes, Mr. Beecher," said she, with the ready tact with which she often read his thoughts and answered them, "even so. I do think myself very, very fortunate! And why should I not? I have excellent health, capital spirits, fair abilities, and, bating an occasional outbreak of anger, a reasonably good temper. As regards personal traits, Mr. Annesley Beecher once called me beautiful—Count Lienstahl would say something twice as rapturous—at all events, quite good-looking enough not to raise antipathies against me at first sight; and lastly, but worth all the rest, I have an intense enjoyment in mere existence; the words 'I live,' are to *me*, 'I am happy.' The alternations of life, its little incidents and adventures, its passing difficulties, are, like the changeful aspects of the seasons, full of interest, full of suggestiveness, calling out qualities of mind and resources of temperament that in the cloudless skies of unbroken prosperity might have lain unused and unknown. And now, Sir, no more sneers at my fancied good fortune; for, whatever *you* may say, I feel it to be real."

There was that in her manner—a blended energy and grace—which went far deeper into Beecher's heart than her mere words, and he gazed at her slightly flushed cheek and flashing eyes with something very nearly rapture, and he muttered to himself, "There she is, a half-bred 'un, and no training, and able to beat them all!"

This time, at all events, she did not read his thoughts; as little, perhaps, did she care to speculate about them. "By-the-by,"

said she, suddenly approaching the chimney and taking up a letter, "this has arrived here, by private hand, since you went out, and it has a half-look of Papa's writing, and is addressed to you."

Beecher took it eagerly. With a glance he recognised it as from Grog, when that gentleman desired to disguise his hand.

"Am I correct?" asked she—"am I correct in my guess?"

He was too deep in the letter to make her any reply. Its contents were as follows:

"DEAR B.,—They've kicked up such a row about that affair at Brussels, that I have been obliged to lie dark for the last fortnight, and in a confoundedly stupid hole on the right bank of the Rhine. I sent over Spicer to meet the Baron, and take Klepper over to Nimmeguen and Magdeburg, and some other small places in Prussia. They can pick up in this way a few thousand florins, and keep the mill going. I gave him strict orders not to see my daughter, who must know nothing whatever of these or any like doings. The Baron she might see, for he knows life thoroughly, and if he is not a man of high honour, he can assume the part so well that it comes pretty much to the same thing. As to yourself, you will, on receipt of this, call on a certain Lazarus Stein, Juden Gasse, No. 41 or 42, and give him your acceptance for two thousand gulden, with which settle your hotel bill, and come on to Bonn, where, at the Post-office, you will find a note, with my address. Tramp, you see, has won the Cotteswold, as I prophesied, and 'Leo the Tenth' nowhere. Cranberry must have got his soup pretty hot, for he has come abroad, and his wife and the children gone down to Scotland. As to your own affairs, Ford says you are better out of the way; and if anything is to be done in the way of compromise, it must be while you are abroad. He does ~~not~~ think Strich can get the rule, and you mustn't distress yourself for an extra outlawry or two. There will be some trouble about the jewels, but I think even that matter may be arranged also. I hope you keep from the tables, and I look for a strict reckoning as to your expenses, and a stricter book up as regards your care of my daughter. 'All square' is the word between pal and pal, and there never was born the man didn't find that to be his best policy when he dealt with

"Your friend,

"CHRISTOPHER DAVIS.

"To while away the time in this dreary dog-hole, I have been

sketching out a little plan of a martingale for the roulette-table. There's only one zero at Homburg, and we can try it there as we go up. There's a flaw in it after the twelfth 'pass,' but I don't despair of getting over the difficulty. Old Stein, the money-changer, was upwards of thirty years croupier at the Cursaal, and get him to tell you the average runs, black and red, at rouge-et-noir, and what are the signs of an intermitting game; and also the six longest runs he has ever known. He is a shrewd fellow, and seeing that you come from me will be confidential.

"There has been another fight in the Crimea, and somebody well licked. I had nothing on the match, and don't care a brass farthing who claimed the stakes.

"Tell Lizzy that I'm longing to see her, and if I didn't write it is because I'm keeping everything to tell her when we meet. If it wasn't for her picture, I don't know what would have become of me since last Tuesday, when the rain set in."

Beecher re-read the letter from the beginning, nor was it an easy matter for him to master at once all the topics it included. Of himself and his own affairs the information was vague and unsatisfactory; but Grog knew how to keep him always in suspense—to make him ever feel that he was swimming for his life, and he himself the only "spar" he could catch at.

"Bring me to book about my care of his daughter!" muttered he, over and over, "just as if she wasn't the girl to take care of herself. Egad! he seems to know precious little about her. I'd give a 'Nap' to show her this letter, and just hear what she'd say of it all. I suppose she'd split on me. She'd go and tell Davis, 'Beecher has put me up to the whole "rig;"' and if she did—What would happen then?" asked he, replying to the low, plaintive whistle which concluded his meditation. "Eh—what! did I say anything?" cried he, in terror.

"Not a syllable. But I could see that you had conjured up some difficulty which you were utterly unable to deal with."

"Well, here it is," said he boldly. "This letter is from your father. It's all full of private details, of which you know nothing, nor would you care to hear; but there is one passage—just one—that I'd greatly like to have your opinion upon. At the same time, I tell you frankly, I have no warranty from your father to let you see it—nay, the odds are, he'd pull me up pretty sharp for doing so without his authority."

"That's quite enough, Mr. Beecher, about *your* scruples. Now

mine go a little further still, for they would make me refuse to learn anything which my father's reserve had kept from me. It is a very easy rule of conscience, and neither hard to remember nor to follow."

"At all events, he meant this for your own eye," said Beecher, showing her the last few lines of the letter.

She read them calmly over, a slight trembling of the lip—so slight that it seemed rather like a play of light over her face—was the only sign of emotion visible, and then, carefully folding the letter, she gave it back, saying, "Yes, I had a right to see these lines."

"He *is* fond of you, and proud of you, too," said Beecher. A very slight nod of her head gave an assent to his remark, and she was silent. "We are to leave this at once," continued he, "and move on to Bonn, where we shall find a letter with your father's address, somewhere, I take it, in that neighbourhood." He waited, hoping she would say something, but she did not speak. And then he went on: "And then you will be once more at home—emancipated from this tiresome guardianship of mine."

"Why tiresome?" asked she, suddenly.

"Oh, by Jove! I know I'm a very slow sort of fellow as a ladies' man—have none of the small talents of those foreigners—couldn't tell Mozart from Verdi—nor, though I can see when a woman is well togged, could I tell you the exact name of any one part of her dress."

"If you really did know all these, and talked of them, I might have found you very tiresome," said she, in that half-careless voice she used when seeming to think aloud. "And you," asked she, suddenly, as she turned her eyes fully upon him—and you, are you to be emancipated then?—are you going to leave us?"

"As to that," replied he, in deep embarrassment, "there's a sort of hitch in it. I ought, if I did the right thing, to be on my way to Italy now, to see Lackington—my brother, I mean. I came abroad for that; but Gr——your father, I should say—induced me to join *him*, and so, with one thing and the other, here I am, and that's really all I know about it."

"What a droll way to go through life!" said she, with one of her low, soft laughs.

"If you mean that I haven't a will of my own, you're all wrong," said he, in some irritation. "Put me straight at my fence, and see if I won't take it. Just say, 'A. B., there's the winning-post,' and mark whether I won't get my speed up."

What a strange glance was that which answered this speech! It implied no assent; as little did it mean the reverse. It was rather the look of one who, out of a maze of tangled fancies, suddenly felt recalled to life and its real interests. To poor Beecher's apprehension it simply seemed a sort of half-compassionate pity, and it made his cheek tingle with wounded pride.

"I know," muttered he to himself, "that she thinks me a confounded fool; but I ain't. Many a fellow in the ring made that mistake, and burned his fingers for it after."

"Well," said she, after a moment or so of thought, "I am ready—at least, I shall be ready very soon. I'll tell Annette to pack up, and prepare for the road."

"I wish I could get you to have some better opinion of me, Miss Lizzy," said he, seriously. "I'd give more than I'd like to say, that you'd—you'd——"

"That I'd what?" asked she calmly.

"That you'd not set me down as a regular flat," said he, with energy.

"I'm not very certain that I know what that means; but I will tell you that I think you very good tempered, very gentle natured, and very tolerant of fifty-and-one caprices, which must be all the more wearisome because unintelligible. And then you are a very fine gentleman, and—the Honourable Annesley Beecher." And holding out her dress in minuet fashion, she curtseyed deeply, and left the room.

"I wish any one would tell me whether I stand to win or not by that book," exclaimed Beecher, as he stood there alone, utterly nonplused and confounded. "Wouldn't she make a stunning actress! By Jove! Webster would give her a hundred a week, and a free benefit!" And with this he went off into a little mental arithmetic, at the end of which he muttered to himself, "And that does not include starring it in the provinces!"

With the air of a man whose worldly affairs went well, he arranged his hair before the glass, put on his hat, gave himself a familiar nod, and went out.

CHAPTER LXVII.

LAZARUS STEIN, GELDWECHSLER.

THE Juden Gasse, in which Beecher was to find out the residence of Lazarus Stein, was a long, straggling street, beginning in the town and ending in a suburb, where it seemed as it were to lose itself. It was not till after a long and patient search that Beecher discovered a small door in an old ivy-covered wall, on which, in irregular letters, faint, and almost illegible, stood the words, "Stein, Geldwechsler." As he rang stoutly at the bell, the door opened, apparently of itself, and admitted him into a large and handsome garden. The walks were flanked by fruit-trees in espalier, with broad borders of rich flowers at either side, and although the centre spaces were given up to the uses of a kitchen-garden, the larger beds, rich in all the colours of the tulip and ranunculus, showed how predominant was the taste for flowers over mere utility. Up one alley, and down another, did Beecher saunter without meeting any one, or seeing what might mean a habitation, when at length, in a little copse of palm-trees, he caught sight of a small diamond-paned window, approaching which, he found himself in front of a cottage whose diminutive size he had never seen equalled, save on the stage. Indeed, in its wooden framework, gaudily painted, its quaint carvings, and its bamboo roof, it was the very type of what one sees in a comic opera. One sash of the little window lay open and showed Beecher the figure of a very small old man, who, in a long dressing-gown of red-brown stuff, and a fez cap, was seated at a table, writing. A wooden tray in front of him was filled with dollars and gold pieces in long stately columns, and a heap of bank-notes lay pressed under a heavy leaden slab at his side. No sooner had Beecher's figure darkened the window

than the old man looked up and came out to meet him, and taking off his cap with a deep reverence, invited him to enter. If the size of the chamber, and its curious walls covered over with cabinet pictures, might have attracted Beecher's attention at another moment, all his wonderment, now, was for the little man himself, whose piercing black eyes, long beard, and hooked nose, gave him an air of almost unearthly meaning.

"I suppose I have the honour to speak to Mr. Stein?" said he, in English, "and that he can understand me in my own tongue?"

"Yaas—go on," said the old man.

"I was told to call upon you by Captain Davis; he gave me your address."

"Ah, der Davis—der Davis—a vaary goot man—my vaary dear friend. You are der rich Engländer that do travel wit him—eh?"

"I am travelling with him just now," said Beecher, laughing slightly; "but as to being rich—why, we'll not dispute about it."

"Yaas, here is his letter. He says, Milord will call on you hisself, and so I hold myself—how you say 'bereit?'—ready—hold myself ready to see you. I have de honour to make you very mush welcome to my poor house."

Beecher thanked him courteously, and producing Davis's letter, mentioned the amount for which he desired to draw.

The old man examined the writing, the signature, and then the seal, handing the document back when he had finished, muttering to himself, "Ah der Davis—der Davis!"

"You know my friend very intimately, I believe?" asked Beecher.

"I belief I do—I belief I do," said he with a low chuckle to himself.

"So he mentioned to me, and added one or two little matters on which I was to ask you for some information. But first this bill—you can let me have these two thousand florins?"

"And what do he do now, der Davis?" asked the Jew, not heeding the question.

"Well, I suppose he rubs on pretty much the same as ever," said Beecher, in some confusion.

"Yaas—yaas—he rub on—and he rub off, too, sometimes—ha! ha! ha!" laughed out the old man, with a fiendish cackle. "Ach, der Davis!"

Without knowing in what sense to take the words, Beecher did not exactly like them, and as little was he pleased with that

singular recurrence to "der Davis," and the little sigh that followed. He was growing impatient, besides, to get his money, and again reverted to the question.

"He look well? I hope he have de goot gesundheit—what you call it?"

"To be sure he does—nothing ever ails him. I never heard him complain of as much as a headache."

"Ach, der Davis, der Davis!" said the old man, shaking his head.

Seeing no chance of success by his direct advances, Beecher thought he'd try a little flank attack by inducing a short conversation, and so he said: "I am on my way to Davis now, with his daughter, whom he left in my charge."

"Whose daughter?" asked the Jew.

"Davis's—a young lady that was educated at Brussels."

"He have no daughter. Der Davis have no daughter."

"Hasn't he, though? just come over to the Four Nations, and I'll show her to you. And such a stunning girl, too!"

"No, no, I never belief it—never; he did never speak to me of a daughter."

"Whether he did or not—there she is, that's all I know."

The Jew shook his head, and sought refuge in his former muttering of "Ach, der Davis!"

"As far as not telling you about his daughter, I can say he never told me, and I fancy we were about as intimate as most people; but the fact is as I tell you."

Another sigh was all his answer, and Beecher was fast reaching the limit of his patience.

"Daughter, or no daughter, I want a matter of a couple of thousand florins—no objection to a trifle more, of course—and wish to know how you can let me have them?"

"The Margraf was here two week ago, and he say to me, 'Lazarus,' say he—'Lazarus, where is your goot friend Davis?' 'Highness,' say I, 'dat I know not.' Den he say, 'I will find him, if I go to Jerusalem;' and I say, 'Go to Jerusalem.'"

"What did he want with him?"

"What he want?—what every one want, and what nobody get, except how he no like—ha! ha! ha! Ach, der Davis!"

Beecher rose from his seat, uncertain how to take this continued inattention to his demand. He stood for a moment in hesitation, his eyes wandering over the walls where the pictures were hanging.

"Ah! if you do care for art, now you suit yourself, and all for

a noting! I sell all dese—dat Gerard Dow, dese two Potters, de leetle Cuyp—a veritable treasure, and de Mieris—de best he ever painted, and de rest, wit de landschaft of Both, for eighty thousand seven hundred florins. It is a schenk—a gift away—noting else.”

“You forget, my excellent friend Stein,” said Beecher, with more assurance than he had yet assumed, “that it was to receive, and not spend, money I came here this morning.”

“You do a leetle of all de two—a leetle of both, so to say,” replied the Jew. “What moneys you want?”

“Come, this is speaking reasonably. Davis’s letter mentions a couple of thousand florins; but if you are inclined to stretch the amount to five, or even four thousand, we’ll not fall out about the terms.”

“How you mean—no fall out out about de terms?” said the other, sharply.

“I meant that for a stray figure or so, in the way of discount, we shouldn’t disagree. You may, in fact, make your own bargain.”

“Make my own bargain, and pay myself, too,” muttered the Jew. “Ach, der Davis, how he would laugh!—ha! ha! ha!”

“Well, I don’t see much to laugh at, old gent, except it be at my own folly, to stand here so long chaffering about these paltry two thousand florins. And now, I say, ‘Yea or nay, will you book up, or not?’”

“Will you buy de Cuyp, and de Wouvermans, and de Ostade?—dat is the question,”

“Egad, if you furnish the ready, I’ll buy the Cathedral and the Cursaal. I’m not particular as to the investment when the cash is easily come at.”

“De cash is very easy to come at,” said the Jew, with a strange grin.

“You’re a trump, Lazarus!” cried Beecher, in ecstasy at his good fortune. “If I had known you some ten years ago, I’d have been another man to-day. I was always looking out for one really fair, honest-hearted fellow to deal with, but I never met with him till now.”

“How you have it—gold or notes?” said Lazarus.

“Well, a little of both, I think,” said Beecher, his eyes greedily devouring the glittering little columns of gold before him.

“How your title?—how your name?” asked Stein, taking up a pen.

"My name is Annesley Beecher. You may write me the 'Honourable Annesley Beecher.'"

"Lord of——"

"I'm not Lord of anything. I'm next in succession to a Peerage, that's all."

"He call you de Viscount—I forget de name."

"Lackington, perhaps?"

"Yaas, dat is de name; and say, give him de moneys for his bill. Now, here is de acceptance, and here you put your sign, across dis."

"I'll write Annesley Beecher, with all my heart; but I'll not write myself Lackington."

"Den you no have de moneys, nor de Cuyp, nor de Ostade," said the Jew, replacing the pen in the ink-bottle.

"Just let me ask you, old boy, how would it benefit you that I should commit a forgery? Is that the way you like to do business?"

"I do know mysel how I like my business to do, and no man teach me."

"What the devil did Davis mean, then, by sending me on this fool's errand? He gave me a distinct intimation that you'd cash my acceptance——"

"Am I not ready? You never go and say to der Davis dat I refuse it! Ah, der Davis!" and he sighed as if from the very bottom of his heart.

"I'll tell him frankly that you made it a condition I was to sign a name that does not belong to me—that I'll tell him."

"What care he for dat? Der Davis write his own name on it and pay it hisself."

"Oh! and Davis was also to endorse this bill, was he?" asked Beecher.

"I should tink he do; oderwise I scarce give you de moneys."

"That, indeed, makes some difference. Not in reality that it wouldn't be just as much a forgery; but if the bill come back to Grog's own hands——"

"Ach, der Grog—ha! ha! ha! 'Tis so long dat I no hear de name—Grog Davis!" and the Jew laughed till his eyes ran over.

"If there's no other way of getting at this money——"

"Dere is no oder way," said Lazarus, in a tone of firmness.

"Then good morning, friend Lazarus, for you'll not catch me spoiling a stamp at that price. No, no, old fellow. I'm up to a thing or two, though you don't suspect it. I only rise to the natural fly, and no mistake."

"I make no mistake; I take vaary goot care of dat," said Lazarus, rising, and taking off his fez, to say adieu. "I wish you de vaary goot day."

Beecher turned away, with a stiff salutation, into the garden. He was angry with Davis, with himself, and with the whole world. It was a rare event in his life to see gold so much within his reach and yet not available, just for a scruple—a mere scruple—for, after all, what was it else? Writing "Lackington" meant nothing, if Lackington were never to see, much less to pay the bill. Once "taken up," as it was sure to be by Grog, what signified it if the words across the acceptance were Lackington or Annesley Beecher? And yet, what could Davis mean by passing him off as the Viscount? Surely, for such a paltry sum as a couple of thousand florins, it was not necessary to assume his brother's name and title. It was some "dodge," perhaps, to acquire consequence in the eyes of his friend Lazarus that he was the travelling companion of an English Peer; and yet, if so, it was the very first time Beecher had known him yield to such a weakness. He *had* a meaning in it, that much was certain, for Grog made no move in the game of life without a plan! "It can't be," muttered Beecher to himself—"it can't be for the sake of any menace over me for the forgery, because he has already in his hands quite enough to push me to the wall on that score, as he takes care to remind me he might any fine morning have me 'up' on that charge." The more Beecher ruminated over what possible intention Davis might have in view, the more did he grow terrified, lest, by any short-comings on his own part, he might thwart the great plans of his deep colleague.

"I never met his equal yet to put a fellow in a cleft stick," muttered Beecher, as he walked to and fro in intense agitation, "and he's just the man also, whenever anything goes wrong, not to listen to a word of explanation. 'Why didn't you do as I bade you?' or, 'As I ordered you?' for that's his phrase generally. 'Who told *you* that you had any option in the matter? Did *I* take you into consultation? Play up to *my* hand!' that's his cry. 'Play up to *my* hand, and never mind your own!' Well, I have been doing so some ten or twelve years back, and a nice game I've made of it! Break with him!—of course I'd break with him, if any one would tell me how! Egad, sometimes I begin to think that transportation and the rest of it would not be a bit harder to bear than old Grog's tyranny! It wears one out—it positively drains a man's nature dry!" There are volcanic throes, that however they may work and struggle,

throw up no lava; so with Beecher. All his passionate indignation could not rouse him to action, although his actual suffering might have prompted energy to any amount. He took out Davis's letter and re-read it. One line which had escaped his attention before, now caught his eye on the blank leaf. It ran thus: "Take care that you do not delay at Aix after receipt of this. Benson's fellows are after you." A cold shudder came over Beecher as he perused the line. Benson's fellows meant bailiffs, detectives, or something of the like. Benson was a money-lender of the most inveterate villany—a fellow who had pursued more men of station and condition than any one living. He was the terror of the "swells." To be in Benson's hands, meant ruin in its most irretrievable shape; and at the very moment he stood there his minions were on his track!

Ere he was well aware of it, he was back at the little window of the cottage.

"I must have this money on your own terms, Stein," said he. "I find that Davis has some urgent need of my presence. I can't delay here another day."

"How many tousand gulden, Milord?" asked the Jew, respectfully, as he dipped his pen in the ink-bottle.

"Davis says two—I should like to say four, or even five."

"Five if you wish it, Milord; to me is it all as one—five, fifteen, or fifty; whatever sum you want."

Beecher put his hand on the other's wrist to detain him while he took a moment's counsel with himself. Never had such a golden opportunity as this presented itself. Never before had he seen the man who so generously proffered his services. It was ask and have. Was he to reject such good fortune?—was he to turn his back on the very first piece of luck that had ever befallen him? What heart-burnings might he be storing up for future years when he looked back to the time that, with a word, he might have made his fortune!

"But are you quite sure, friend Lazarus, that if I say eight or ten thousand—for I don't want more—Davis will be as willing to back the bill?"

"I am quite sure."

"Well, now, I am not so very certain of that, and as it is Davis will have to book up, it might be safer, perhaps, that I didn't go beyond the amount he mentions—eh?"

"As you will—as you please yourself I only say, dere is der Herr Davis's name; he send it to me and say, 'Milord will do de rest.'"

"So that he sent you a blank acceptance?" cried Beecher, in amazement.

"Yaas, just as you see—'Christopher Davis,' and de flourish as usual. Ach, der Davis!" and he sighed once more.

The man who held Grog's signature on a blank stamp assumed no common shape in Annesley Beecher's eyes, and he continued to gaze on the old man with a strange sense of awe and astonishment. If he had not the document there before him on the table he would not have believed it. The trustful courage of Van Amburgh, who used to place his head in the lion's mouth, seemed poor in comparison with such heroic boldness as this; and he gazed at the writing in a sort of fascination.

"And Grog actually sent you that over by letter?" asked he again.

"Yaas, as you see," was the calm answer.

"Well, here goes then, Abraham—Lazarus, I mean; make it out for a matter of—five—no, eight—hang it, let us say ten thousand florins when we are about it! Ten thousand, at six months—eh?"

"Better at tree months—we can always renew," said Stein, calmly.

"Of course; and by that time we may want a little more liquor in the decanter—eh! old boy?" said Beecher, laughing joyfully.

"To be sure, vaary mush more liquor as you want it."

"What a brick!" said Beecher, clapping him on the shoulder in all the ecstasy of delight.

"Dere!" said the Jew, as he finished writing, "all is done; only to say where it be paid—what bank at London."

"Well, that is a bit of a puzzle, I must own!" said Beecher, rubbing his chin with an air of doubt and hesitation.

"Where do de Lord Lackington keep his account?" asked the Jew; and the question was so artfully posed that Beecher answered promptly,

"Harmer and Gore's, Lombard-street, or Pall-Mall, whichever you like."

"Harmer and Gore. I know dem vaary well—that will do; you do sign your name dere."

"I wish I could persuade you that Annesley Beecher would be enough—eh?"

"You write de name as der Davis say, and no oder!"

"Here goes, then! 'In for a penny,' as the proverb says,"

muttered he; and in a bold, dashing hand, wrote "Lackington" across the bill.

"Ah!" said the Jew, as he examined it with his glass, and scanned every letter over and over; "and now, vat you say for de Cuyp, and de Mieris, and de Ostade—vill you take em all, as I say?"

"I'll think over it—I'll reflect a bit first, Master Stein. As for pictures, they're rather an encumbrance when a man hasn't a house to hang them in."

"You have de vaary fine house in town, and an oder vaary fine house in de country, beside a what you call box—shoot box——"

"Nothing of the kind, Lazarus. I haven't a thing as big as the crib we are standing in. Your mind is always running upon my brother; but there's a wide difference between our fortunes, I assure you. He drew the first ticket in the lottery of life; and, by the way, that reminds me of something in Grog's letter that I was to ask you." And Beecher took the epistle from his pocket and ran his eye over it. "Ah! here it is! 'Ask Stein what are the average runs at rouge-et-noir? what are the signs of an intermitting game? and what are the longest runs he remembers on one colour?' Can you answer me these?"

"Some of dem I have here," said Stein, taking down from a shelf a small vellum-bound volume, fastened with a padlock and chain, the key of which he wore attached to his watch. "Here is de grand 'arcanum'" said he, laughing; "here are de calculs made in de experience of forty-one year! Where is de man in Europe can say as mush as dat? In dis book is recounted de great game of de Duc de Brancas, where he broke de bank every night of de week till Saturday—two million tree hundred tousand francs! Caumartin, the first croupier, shot hisself, and Nogeot go mad. He reckon de moneys in de Casette, for when he say on Friday night, 'Monseigneur,' say he, 'we have not de full sum here—there's one hundred and seventy tousand francs too little,' de Duc reply, 'Never mind, mon cher Monsieur Nogeot, I am noways pressed—don't distress yourself—only let it be pay, before I go home to bed.' Nogeot lose his reason when he hear it. Ah! here is de whole 'Geschichte,' and here de table of chances."

Beecher gazed on the precious volume as Aladdin might have done on the lamp. It was the mystic key to untold riches. With that marvellous book a man needed no more in life; there lay all the "cabals," all the "martingales," that years of intense

toil and deep study had discovered. To win that knowledge, too, what hearts had been broken—what desolation—what death! It was a record of martyrs in his eyes, and he really regarded it with a sort of rapturous veneration.

Old Lazarus did not fail to detect the expression of wonderment and admiration. He saw depicted there the glowing ecstacy that all the triumphs of high art could not call up. The vigorous energy of Wouvermans, the glowing colouring of Cuyp, the mellow richness of Mieris, had not touched that nature which now vibrated in every chord to the appeal of Fortune. It was the submissive worship of a devotee before some sacred relic! Stein read that gaze, and tracked its every motive, and with a solemn gesture he clasped the volume and locked it.

"But you are surely going to show me—I mean, you are about to tell me the answer to these questions?"

Stein shook his head dubiously, as he said, "Dat is my Kleinod, my idol—in dat book lie de secret of secrets, and I say to myself, 'Lazarus, be poor—be destitute—be houseless to-morrow, and you know how to get rich if you will.' De great law of Chances—de rule dat guide what we call 'Luck'—dere it is written! I have but to say I will have, and I have! When I die, I will burn it, or have it lay wit me in my grave."

"It's not possible you could do this!" cried Beecher, in horror: far less of indignation had it cost him to hear that any one should carry out of the world with him the cure of cancer, of cholera, or some such dread scourge of poor humanity. The black-hearted selfishness of such a crime seemed without a parallel, and for a second or two, as he looked at the decrepid object before him, and saw the lonely spot, the isolation, and the propitious moment, a strange wild thought flashed across his mind that it might be **not only pardonable, but praiseworthy**, to seize upon and carry it off by force.

Whether the old man read what was passing within him is hard to say, but he returned the other's look as steadily and as fiercely, and Beecher felt abashed and cowed.

"I'll tell you what, Stein," said he, after a pause, "I'll buy that same old volume of yours, just for the curiosity of the thing, and I'll make you a sporting offer—I'll give you ten thousand francs for it!"

A low wailing whistle of utter contempt was all the Jew replied.

"Well, it's a splendid bid, if you come to think of it; for,

just suppose it be everything you say—and I own I can't believe it is—but suppose it were, who is to guarantee the continuance of these great public play-tables? All the Governments of Europe are setting their faces against them—not a year passes without one or two being closed. This very spring there was a talk of suppressing play at Baden. Who can tell what the first outbreak of fanatic zeal may effect?"

"No, no. So long as men live, dey will do tree tings—make love, make war, and gamble. When dey give up dese, de world shut up."

There was a truthful force about this Beecher felt could not be gainsaid, and he stood silent and confuted. There was another appeal that he had not tried, and he resolved to neglect nothing that gave even the faintest chance of success. He addressed himself to the Jew's goodness of heart—to the benevolence that he knew must have its home in his nature. To what end, therefore, should he carry to the grave, or destroy, a secret that might be a blessing to thousands? He depicted, not without knowledge, some of the miseries of the man "forgotten of Fortune"—the days of fevered anxiety—the nights of agonizing torture, as, half maddened by his losses, he played wildly, recklessly on—suicide in all its darkest forms ever present to his aching faculties, while all this time one glance within that little book would save him. And he wound up all by a burst of enthusiastic praise of a man who could thus transmit happiness to generations unborn.

"I never wish to sell dat book. I mean it alway to die wit myself! but if you will give me one tousand pounds, it is yours. If you delay, I will say two tousands."

"Done—I take it. Of course a bill will do—eh?"

"Yaas, I will take a bill—a bill at tree months. When it is yours, I will tell you dat you are de luckiest man in all Europe. You have dere, in dat leetle volume, all man strive for, fight for, cheat for, die for!"

As he said this, he sat down again at his desk to write the acceptance Beecher was to sign, while the other, withdrawing into the window recess, peered eagerly into the pages of the precious book.

"Mind," said the Jew, "you no let any one see de 'Cabal.' If it be once get abroad, de bank will change de play. You just carry in your head de combinations, and you go in, and win de millions dat you want at de time."

"Just so," said Beecher, in ecstasy, the very thought of thó

golden cataract sending a thrill of rapture through him. "I suppose, however, I may show it to Davis?"

"Ach, der Davis, yaas—der Davis can see it," said the Jew, with a laugh whose significance it were very hard to interpret. "Dere now," said Stein, handing him the pen, "write de name dere as on de oder."

"Still Lackington, I suppose—eh?" asked Beecher.

"Yaas—just de same," said Stein, gravely.

"'Just as good for a sheep as a lamb,' as the proverb says," muttered Beecher. And he dashed off the name with a reckless flourish. "I'll tell you one thing, Master Stein," said he, as he buttoned up the magic volume in the breast of his coat, "if this turn out the good dodge you say it is, I'll behave handsomely to you. I pledge you my word of honour, I'll stand to you for double—treble the sum you have got written there. *You* don't know the fellow you're dealing with—very few know him, for the matter of that—but though he has got a smart lesson or two in life, he has good stuff in him still; and *if*—I say *if*, because, of course, all depends on *that*—*if* I can give the bank at Hamburg a spring in the air with the aid of this, I'll not forget *you* old boy."

"You make dem all spring in de air!—Ems, Wiesbaden, Baden—all go up togeder!" And the Jew laughed with the glee of a demon.

"Not that I want to hurt any one—not that I'd like to squeeze a fellow too hard," broke in Beecher, suddenly, for a quick thrill of superstitious fear—the gambler's innate conscience—shot through him, and made him tremble to think that, by a chance word, or thought, he might disgust the Fortune he would propitiate. "No, no; my motto is, 'Live and let live!' There's room for us all!" And with the utterance of a sentiment **he** believed so truly generous, he took leave of the Jew, and departed.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

A VILLAGE NEAR THE RHINE.

It was at a little village called Holbach, about fifteen miles from the right bank of the Rhine, Grog Davis had taken up his quarters while awaiting the arrival of his daughter. Near as it was to that great high road of Europe, scarcely out of earshot of whizzing steamers and screaming trains, the spot was wonderfully secluded and unvisited. A little trout stream, known to a few, who treasured the secret like fishermen, made the inn resorted to in the months of May and June; but for the rest of the year the "Golden Hook" had few customers, and the landlord almost abdicated his functions till spring came round again. The house, originally intended for a mill, was built over the river itself, so that the indolent angler might actually have fished from the very window. The pine-clad mountains of Nassau enclosed the narrow glen, which straggled irregularly along for miles, now narrowing to a mere strip, now expanding into little plains of fertile meadow-land, with neat cottages and speckled cattle scattered around them. A narrow belt of garden flanked the river, on whose edge a walk of trellised vines was fashioned—a charming spot in the sultry heat of summer, with its luxuriant shade above and the rippling stream below. Davis had seen the place years before in some hurried journey; but his retentive mind carried a full memory of the spot, and he soon found that it comprised all he was in search of—it was easy of access, secret, and cheap.

Only too well pleased to meet with a guest at this dead season of the year, they gave up to him the choicest apartment, and treated him with every solicitude and attention. His table was supplied well, almost luxuriously; the good wine of Ettleberg,

given in liberal profusion; the vine alley converted into a pistol gallery for his use; and all for such a sum per diem as would not have satisfied a waiter at the Clarendon. But it was the calm seclusion, the perfect isolation, that gratified him most. Let him stroll which way he would, he never chanced upon a traveller. It was marvellous, indeed, how such a place could have escaped that prying tribe of ramblers which England each year sends forth to wrangle, dispute, and disparage everything over Europe; and yet here were precisely the very objects they usually sought after—beautiful scenery, a picturesque peasantry, and a land romantic in all its traits and traditions.

Not that Grog cared for these: rocks, waterfalls, ruins, leafy groves, or limpid streams, made no appeal to *him*. He lived for the life of men, their passions, and their ambitions. He knew some people admired this kind of thing, and there were some who were fond of literature; others liked pictures; others, again, fancied old coins. He had no objection. They were, if not very profitable, at least harmless tastes. All he asked was, not to be the companion of such dreamers. "Give me the fellow that knows life," would he say; and I am afraid that the definition of that same "life" would have included some things scarcely laudable.

If the spot were one to encourage indolence and ease, Davis did not yield to this indulgence. He arose early; walked for health; shot with the pistol for practice; studied his martingale for the play-table; took an hour with the small-sword with an old maître d'armes whom he found in the village; and without actually devoting himself to it as a task, practised himself in German by means of conversation; and lastly, he thought deeply and intently over the future. For speculations of this kind he had no mean capacity. If he knew little of the human heart in its higher moods, he understood it well in its shortcomings and its weaknesses; to what temptations a man might yield, when to offer them, and how, were mysteries he had often brooded over. In forecastings of this order, therefore, Davis exercised himself. Strange eventualities, "cases of conscience," that I would fain believe never occurred to you, dear reader, nor to me, arose before him, and he met them manfully.

The world is generous in its admiration of the hard-worked minister, toiling night-long at his desk, receiving and answering his twenty despatches daily, and rising in the House to explain this, refute that, confirm the other, with all the clearness of an orator and all the calmness of a clerk; but after all he is but a

fly-wheel in that machine of government, of which there are some hundred other component parts, all well fitting and proportioned. Précis writers and private secretaries cram, colleagues advise him. The routine of official life hedges him in his proper groove, and if not overcome by indolence or affected by zeal, he can scarcely blunder. Not so your man of straits and emergency, your fellow living by his wits, and wresting from the world, that fancies it does not want him, reward and recognition. It is no marvel if a proud three-decker sail round the globe; but very different is our astonishment if a cock-boat come safely from the China Seas, or brave the stormy passage round the Cape. Such a craft as this was Grog, his own captain: himself the crew, he had neither owner nor underwriter; and yet, amidst the assembled navies of the world, he would have shown his bunting!

The unbroken calm of his present existence was most favourable to these musings, and left him to plan his campaign in perfect quiet. Whether the people of the inn regarded him as a great minister in disgrace come, by hard study, to retrieve a lost position, a man of science deeply immersed in some abstruse problem, or a distinguished author seeking isolation for the free exercise of his imagination, they treated him not only with great respect, but a sort of deference was shown in their studious effort to maintain the silence and stillness around. When he was supposed to be at his studies, not a voice was heard, not a footfall on the stairs. There is no such flattery to your man of scapes and accidents, your thorough adventurer, as that respectful observance that implies he is a person of condition. It is like giving of free will to the highwayman the purse he expected to have a fight for. Davis delighted in these marks of deference, and day by day grew more eager in exacting them.

"I heard some noise outside there, this morning, Carl," said he to the waiter; "what was the meaning of it?" For a moment or two the waiter hesitated to explain, but after a little went on to speak of a stranger who had been a resident of the inn for some months back without ever paying his bill, the law, singularly enough, not giving the landlord the power of turning him adrift, but simply of ceasing to afford him sustenance, and waiting for some opportunity of his leaving the house, to forbid his re-entering it. Davis was much amused at this curious piece of legislation, by which a moneyless guest could be starved out, but not expelled, and put many questions as to the stranger, his age, appearance, and nation. All the waiter knew was, that he was a venerable-looking man, portly, advanced in life, with

specious manners, a soft voice, and a benevolent smile; as to his country, he couldn't guess. He spoke several languages, and his German was, though peculiar, good enough to be a native's.

"But how does he live," said Davis; "he must eat?"

"There's the puzzle of it!" exclaimed Carl; "for a while he used to watch while I was serving a breakfast or a dinner, and sallying out of his room, which is at the end of the corridor, he'd make off, sometimes with a cutlet—perhaps a chicken, now a plate of spinach, now an omelette, till, at last, I never ventured up-stairs with the tray without some one to protect it. Not that even this always sufficed, for he was occasionally desperate, and actually seized a dish by force."

"Even these chances, taken at the best, would scarcely keep a man alive," said Davis.

"Nor would they; but we suspect he must have means of getting out at night and making a 'raid' over the country. We constantly hear of fowls carried off; cheese and fruit stolen. There he is now, creeping along the gallery. Listen! I have left some apples outside."

With a gesture to enforce caution, Davis arose, and placed a percussion-cap on a pistol, a motion of his hand sufficing to show that the weapon was not loaded.

"Open the door gently," said he; and the waiter, stealing over noiselessly, turned the handle. Scarcely had the door been drawn back, when Grog saw the figure of a man, and snapped off the pistol. At the same moment, he sprang from the spot, and rushed out to the corridor. The stranger, to all seeming, was not even startled by the report, but was gravely occupied in examining his sleeve to see if he had been struck. He lifted up his head, and Davis, with a start, cried out,

"What, Paul!—Paul Classon! Is this possible?"

"Davis—old fellow!—do I see you here?" exclaimed the other, in a deep and mellow voice, utterly devoid of irritation or even excitement.

"Come in—come in here, Paul," said Davis, taking him by the arm; and he led him within the room. "Little I suspected on whom I was playing this scurvy trick."

"It was not loaded," said the other, coolly.

"Of course not."

"I thought so," said he, with an easy smile; "they've had so many devices to frighten me."

"Come, Paul, old fellow, pour yourself out a tumbler of that

red wine, while I cut you some of this ham ; we'll have plenty of time for talk afterwards."

The stranger accepted the invitation, but without the slightest show of eagerness or haste. Nay, he unfolded his napkin leisurely, and fastened a corner in one button-hole—as some old-fashioned epicures have a trick of doing. He held his glass, too, up to the light, to enjoy the rich colour of the wine; and smacked his lips as he tasted it with the air of a connoisseur.

"A Burgundy, Davis, eh?" asked he, sipping again.

"I believe so. In truth, I know little about these wines."

"Oh, yes, a 'Pomard,' and very good of its kind. Too loaded, of course, for the time of year, except for such palates as England rears."

Davis had now covered his friend's plate with ham and capon; and at last was pleased to see him begin his breakfast.

We are not about to impose upon our reader the burden of knowing more of Mr. Classon than is requisite for the interests of our story; but while he eats the first regular meal he has tasted for two months and more, let us say a word or so about him. He was a clergyman, whose life had been one continued history of mischances. Occasionally the sun of prosperity would seem disposed to shine genially on his head; but for the most part his lot was to walk with dark and lowering skies above him.

If he held any preferment, it was to quarrel with his rector, his dean, or his bishop—to be cited before commissions—tried by surrogates—pronounced contumacious—suspended, and Heaven knows what else. He was everlastingly in litigation with churchwardens and parish authorities, discovering rights of which he was defrauded, and privileges of which he was deprived. None like him to ferret out Acts of Edward or Henry, and obsolete bequests of long-buried founders of this, that, or t'other, of which the present guardians were little better than pickpockets. Adverse decisions and penalties pressing on him, he grew libellous, he spoke, wrote, and published all manner of defamatory things, accused every one of peculation, fraud, and falsehood, and, as the spirit of attack strengthened in him by exercise, menaced this man with prosecution, and that, with open exposure. Trials by law, and costs, accumulated against him, and he was only out of gaol, here, to enter it again, there. From the Courts "above" he soon descended to those "below;" he became dissipated and dissolute, his hireling pen scrupled at nothing, and he assailed any thing or any one, to order. Magistrates "had him up" as the author of threatening letters

or begging epistles. To-day, he was the mock secretary of an imaginary charity; to-morrow, he'd appear as a distressed missionary going out to some island in the Pacific. He was eternally before the world, until the paragraph that spoke of him grew to be headed by the words, "The Reverend Paul Classon again!" or, more briefly, "Paul Classon's last!" His pen, all this while, was his sole subsistence, and what a bold sweep it took!—impeachment of Ministers, accusation of theft, forgery, intimation of even worse crimes against the highest names in the realm, startling announcements of statesmen bribed, ambassadors corrupted, pasquinades against bishops and judges, libellous stories of people in private life, prize fights, prophetic almanacks, mock missionary journals, stanzas to celebrate quack remedies—even street ballads were amongst his literary efforts; while, personally, he presided at low singing establishments, and was the president of innumerable societies in localities only known to the police. It was difficult to take up a newspaper without finding him either reported drunk and disorderly in the police-sheet, obstructing the thoroughfare by a crowd assembled to hear him, having refused to pay for his dinner or his bed, assaulted the landlady, or, crime of crimes, used intemperate language to "G 493." At last, they got actually tired of trying him for begging, and imprisoning him for battery—the law was wearied out; but the world also had its patience exhausted, and Paul saw that he must conquer a new hemisphere. He came abroad.

What a changeful life was it now that he led—at one time a tutor, at another a commissionaire for an hotel, a railway porter, a travelling servant, a police spy, the doorkeeper of a circus company, editor of an English journal, veterinary, language master, agent for patent medicines, picture-dealer, and companion to a nervous invalid, which, as Paul said, meant a furious maniac. There is no telling what he went through of debt and difficulty, till the police actually preferred passing him quietly over the frontier to following up with penalty so incurable an offender. In this way had he wandered about Europe for years, the terror of legations, the pestilence of charitable committees. Contributions to enable the Rev. Paul Classon to redeem his clothes, his watch, his divinity library, to send him to England, to the Andes, to Africa, figured everywhere. I dare not say how often he had been rescued out of the lowest pit of despondency, or snatched like a brand from the burning; in fact, he lived in a pit, and was always on fire.

"I am delighted," said Davis, as he replenished his friend's plate, "I am delighted to see that you have the same good, hearty appetite as of old, Paul."

"Ay, Kit," said he, with a gentle sigh, "the appetite has been more faithful than the dinner; on the same principle, perhaps, that the last people who desert us are our creditors!"

"I suspect you've had rather a hard time of it," said Davis, compassionately.

"Well, not much to complain of—not anything that one would call hardships," said Classon, as he pushed his plate from him and proceeded to light a cigar; "we're all strugglers, Kit, that's the fact of it."

"I suppose it is; but it ain't very disagreeable to be a struggler with ten thousand a year."

"If the having and enjoying were always centered in the same individual," said Classon, slowly, "what you say would be unanswerable; but it's not so, Kit. No, no; the fellows who really enjoy life never have anything. They are, so to say, guests on a visit to this earth, come to pass a few months pleasantly, to put up anywhere, and be content with everything." Grog shook his head dissentingly, and the other went on: "Who knows the truth of what I am saying better than either of us? How many broad acres did your father or mine bequeath us? What debentures, railroad shares, mining scrip, or mortgages? And yet, Kit, if we come to make up the score of pleasant days and glorious nights, do you fancy that any Noble Lord of them all would dispute the palm with us? Oh," said he, rapturously, "give me the unearned enjoyments of life—pleasures that have never cost me a thought to provide, nor a sixpence to pay for! Pass the wine, Kit—that bottle is better than the other;" and he smacked his lips, while his eyes closed in a sort of dreamy rapture.

"I'd like to hear something of your life, Paul," said Davis. "I often saw your name in the *Times* and the *Post*, but I'd like to have your own account of it."

"My dear Kit, I've had fifty lives. It's the man you should understand—the fellow that is here," and he slapped his broad chest, as he spoke. "As for mere adventures, what are they? Squalls that never interfere with the voyage—not even worth entering in the ship's log."

"Where's your wife, Paul?" asked Davis abruptly, for he was half impatient under the aphorising tone of his companion.

"When last I heard of her," said Classon, slowly, as he eyed

his glass to the light, "she was at Chicago—if that be the right prosody of it—lecturing on 'Woman's Rights.' Nobody knew the subject better than Fanny."

"I heard she was a very clever woman," said Davis.

"Very clever," said Classon; "discursive; not always what the French call 'conséquent,' but certainly clever, and a sweet poetess." There was a racy twinkle in that reverend eye as he said the last words, so full of malicious drollery that Davis could not help remarking it; but all Classon gave for explanation was, "This to her health and happiness!" and he drained off a bumper. "And yours, Kit—what of her?" asked he.

"Dead these many years. Do you remember her?"

"Of course I do. I wrote the article on her first appearance at the Surrey. What a handsome creature she was then! It was I predicted her great success; it was I that saved her from light comedy parts, and told her to play *Lady Teazle*!"

"I'll show you her born image to-morrow—her daughter," said Davis, with a strange choking sensation that made him cough; "she's taller than her mother—more style also."

"Very difficult, that—very difficult, indeed," said Classon, gravely. "There was a native elegance about her I never saw equalled; and then her walk, the carriage of the head, the least gesture, had all a certain grace that was fascination."

"Wait till you see Lizzy," said Davis proudly; "you'll see these all revived."

"Do you destine her for the boards, Kit?" asked Classon, carelessly.

"For the stage? No, of course not," replied Davis, rudely.

"And yet these are exactly the requirements would fetch a high price just now. Beauty is not a rare gift in England; nor are form and symmetry; but except in the highly born there is a lamentable deficiency in that easy gracefulness of manner, that blended dignity and softness, that form the chief charm of woman. If she be what you say, Kit—if she be, in short, her mother's daughter—it is a downright insanity not to bring her out."

"I'll not hear of it! That girl has cost me very little short of ten thousand pounds—ay, ten thousand pounds—schooling, masters, and the rest of it. She's no fool, so I take it, it ain't thrown away! As regards beauty, I'll stake fifteen to ten, in hundreds, that, taking your stand at the foot of St. James's-street on a Drawing-room day, you don't see her equal. I'm ready to put down the money to-morrow, and that's giving three to two

against the field! And is that the girl I'm to throw away on the Haymarket? She's a Derby filly, I tell you, Paul, and will be first favorite one of these days."

"Faustum sit augurium!" said Classon, as he raised his glass in a theatrical manner, and then drained it off. "Still, if I be rightly informed, the stage is often the ante-chamber to the Peerage. The attractions that dazzle thousands form the centre of fascination for some one."

"She may find her way to a coronet without that," said Davis, rudely.

"Ah, indeed!" said Paul, with a slight elevation of the eyebrow; but though his tone invited a confidence, the other made no further advances.

"And now for yourself, Classon, what have you been at lately?" said Davis, wishing to change the subject.

"Literature and the arts. I have been contributing to a London weekly, as Crimean correspondent, with occasional letters from the gold diggings. I have been painting portraits, for a florin the head, till I have exhausted all the celebrities of the three villages near us. My editor has, I believe, run away, however, and supplies have ceased for some time back."

"And what are your plans now?"

"I have some thoughts of going back to Divinity. These newly invented water-cure establishments are daily developing grander proportions, some have got German bands, some donkeys, some pleasure-boats, others rely upon lending libraries and laboratories, but the latest dodge is a chaplain."

"But won't they know you, Paul? Have not the newspapers 'blown you?'"

"Ah, Davis, my dear friend," said he, with a benevolent smile, "it's far easier to live down a bad reputation than to live up to a good one. I'd only ask a week—one week's domestication with the company of these places—to show I was a martyred saint. I have, so to say, a perennial fount of goodness in my nature that has never failed me."

"I remember it at school," said Davis, drily.

"You took the clever line, Kit, 'suum cuique;' it would never have suited me. You were born to thrive upon men's weaknesses, mine the part to have a vested interest in their virtues."

"If you depend upon their virtues for a subsistence, I'm not surprised to see you out at elbows," said Davis, roughly.

"Not so, Kit—not so," said the other, blandly, in rebuke. "There's a great deal of weak good-nature always floating about

life. The world is full of fellows with 'Pray take me in' written upon them."

"I can only vouch for it very few have come in my way," said Davis, with a harsh laugh.

"So much the better for *them*," said Paul, gravely.

"A pause of considerable duration now ensued between them, broken at last by Davis abruptly saying, "Is it not a strange thing, it was only last night I was saying to myself, 'What the deuce has become of Holy Paul, the newspapers have seemingly forgotten him? It can't be that he is dead?'"

"Lazarus only sleepeth," said Classon; "and indeed my last eleven weeks here seem little other than a disturbed sleep."

Continuing his own train of thought, Davis went on: "If I could chance upon him now, he's just the fellow I want, or rather that I may want."

"If it is a lampoon, or a satire, you're thinking of, Kit, I've given them up; I make no more blistering ointments, but turn all my skill to balsams. They give no trouble in compounding, and pay even better. Ah, Davis, my worthy friend, what a mistake it is to suppose that a man must live by his talents, while his real resource is his temperament. For a life of easy enjoyment, that blessed indolence that never knew a care, it is heart, not head, is needed."

"All I can say is, that with the fellows I've been most with, heart had very little to do with them, and the best head was the one that least trusted his neighbours."

"A narrow view, my dear friend—a narrow view, take my word for it; as one goes on in life he thinks better of it."

A malicious grin was all the answer Davis made to this remark. At last he turned his eyes full upon the other, and in a low but distinct voice said, "Let us have no more of this, Paul. If we are to play, let us play, as the Yankees say, without the 'items'—no cheating on either side. Don't try the Grand Benevolence dodge with *me*—don't. When I said a while ago I might want you, it was no more than I meant. You *may* be able to render me a service—a great service."

"Say how," said Classon, drawing his chair nearer to him—"say how, Kit, and you'll not find the terms exorbitant."

"It's time enough to talk about the stakes when we are sure the match will come off," said Davis, cautiously. "All I'll say for the present is, I may want you."

Classon took out a small and very greasy-looking note-book from his waistcoat pocket, and with his pencil in hand, said,

"About what time are you likely to need me?" Don't be particular as to a day, or a week, but just in a rough-guessing sort of way say when."

"I should say in less than a month from this time—perhaps within a fortnight."

"All right," said Classon, closing his book, after making a brief note. "You smile," said he, blandly, "at my methodical habits, but I have been a red-tapist all my life, Kit. I don't suppose you'll find any man's papers, letters, documents, and so forth, in such trim order as mine—all labelled, dated, and indexed. Ah! there is a great philosophy in this practical equanimity, take my word for it there is."

"How far are we from Neuweid here?" asked Davis, half-pettishly, for every pretension of his reverend friend seemed to jar upon his nerves.

"About sixteen or eighteen miles, I should say?"

"I must go or send over there to-morrow," continued Davis. "The postmaster sends me word that several letters have arrived, some to my address, some to my care. Could you manage to drive across?"

"Willingly; only remember, that once I leave this blessed sanctuary I may find the door closed against my return. They've a strange legislation here——"

"I know—I've heard of it," broke in Davis. "I'll guarantee everything, so that you need have no fears on that score. Start at daybreak, and fetch back all letters you find there for me or for the Honourable Annesley Beecher."

"The Honourable Annesley Beecher!" said Classon, as he wrote the name in his note-book. "Dear me! the last time I heard that name was—let me see—fully twelve years ago. It was after that affair at Brighton. I wrote an article for the *Heart of Oak*, on the 'Morality of our Aristocracy.' How I lashed their vices, how I stigmatised their lives of profligacy and crime!"

"You infernal old hypocrite!" cried Davis, with a half-angry laugh.

"There was no hypocrisy in that, Kit. If I tell you that a statue is bad in drawing, or incorrect in anatomy, I never assert thereby that I myself have the torso of Hercules or the limbs of Antinous."

"Leave people's vices alone, then; they're the same as their debts—if you're not going to pay them, you've no right to talk about them."

"Only on public grounds, Kit. Our duty to society, my dear friend, has its own requirements!"

"Fiddlestick!" said Davis, angrily, as he pushed his glass from before him; then, after a moment, went on: "Do you start early, so as to be back here before evening—my mind is running on it. There's three Naps," said he, placing the gold pieces on the table. "You'll not want more."

"Strange magnetism is the touch of gold to one's palm," said Classon, as he surveyed the money in the hollow of his hand. "How marvellous that these bits of stamped metal should appeal so forcibly to my inner consciousness."

"Don't get drunk with them, that's all," said Davis, with a stern savagery of manner, as he arose from his seat. "There's my passport—you may have to show it at the office. And now, good-by, for I have a long letter to write to my daughter."

Classon poured the last of the Burgundy into a tumbler, and drank it off, and hiccupping out, "I'll haste me to the Capitol!" left the room.

CHAPTER LXIX.

IMMINENT TIDINGS.

It was a very wearisome day to Davis as he waited for the return of Paul Classon. Grog's was not a mind made for small suspicions or petty distrusts—he was a wholesale dealer in iniquity, and despised minute rogueries; yet he was not altogether devoid of anxiety as hour by hour went over, and no sign of Classon. He tried to pass the time in his usual mode. He shot with the pistol, he fenced, he whipped the trout stream, he went over his “martingale” with the cards, but, somehow, everything went amiss with him. He only hit the bull's-eye once in three shots—he fenced wide—a pike carried off his tackle—and, worst of all, he detected a flaw in the great “Cabal,” that, if not remediable, must render it valueless.

“A genuine Friday, this!” muttered he, as he sauntered up a little eminence, from which a view might be had of the road for above a mile. “And what nonsense it is people saying they're not superstitious. I suppose I have as little of that kind of humbug about me as my neighbours; yet I wouldn't play half-crowns at blind-hookey to-day. I'd not take the favourite even against a chance horse. I'd not back myself to leap that drain yonder; and why? just because I'm in, what the French call ‘guignon.’ There's no other word for it that ever I heard. These are the days Fortune says to a man, ‘Shut up, and don't book a bet!’ It's a wise fellow takes the warning. I know it so well, that I always prepare for a run against me, and as sure as I am here, I feel that something or other is going wrong elsewhere. Not a sign of him—not a sign!” said he, with a heavy sigh, as he gazed long and earnestly along the line of road. “He hasn't bolted, that I'm sure of; he'd not ‘try that on’

with *me*. He remembers to this very hour a licking I gave him at school. I know what it is, he's snug in a wine 'Schenke.' He's in for a big drink, the old beast, as if he couldn't get blind drunk when he came home. I think I see him holding forth to the boors, and telling them what an honour it is to them to sit in his company; that he took a high class at Oxford, and was all but Bishop of——Eh, is that he? No, it's going t'other way. Confounded fool!—but worse fool myself for trusting him. That's exactly what people would say: 'He gave Holy Paul three Naps, and expected to see him come back sober!' Well, so I did; and just answer me this: Is not all the work of this world done by rogues and vagabonds? It suits them to be honest for a while; they ride to order so long as they like the stable. Not a sign of him!" And with a comfortless sigh he turned back to the house.

"I wish I knew how Lizzy was to-night!" muttered he, as he rested his head on his hand and sat gazing at her picture. "Ay, that is your own saucy smile, but the world will take that out of you, and put a puckered-up mouth and hard lines in its place, that it will, confound it! And those eyes will have another kind of brightness in them, too, when they begin to read life glibly. My poor darling, I wish you could stay as you are. Where are you now, I wonder? Not thinking of old Kit, I'm certain! And yet, maybe, I wrong her—maybe she is just dwelling on long—long ago—home, and the rest of it. Ay, darling, that's what the lucky ones have in life, and never so much as know their luck in having it. By Jove! she is handsome!" cried he, as he held up the miniature in ecstasy before him. "'If she's so beautiful, Mr. Ross, why don't she come to the Drawing-room?' say the Court people. Ay, you'll see her there yet, or I'm not Kit Davis! Don't be impatient, ladies; make your running while the course is your own, for there's a clipper coming. I'd like to see where they'll be when Lizzy takes the field."

And now in his pride he walked the room, with head erect and arms folded. It was only for a very short space, however, that these illusions withdrew him from his gloomier reveries, for with a start he suddenly recurred to all the anxieties of the morning, and once more issued forth upon the high road to look out for Classon. The setting sun sent a long golden stream of light down the road, on which not a living thing was to be seen. Muttering what were scarcely blessings on the head of his messenger, he strolled listlessly along. Few men could calculate the eventualities of life better or quicker than Davis. Give him

the man and the opportunities, and he would speedily tell you what would be the upshot. He knew thoroughly well how far experience and temperament mould the daring spirit, and how the caution that comes of education tames down the wild influences suggested by temptation.

"No," said he to himself, "though he had my passport and three Napoleons besides, he has not levanted. He is far too deep a fellow for that."

At last, a low rumbling sound came up from the distance; he stopped and listened. It came and went at intervals, till at last he could distinctly mark the noise of wheels and the voice of a man urging on his horse. Davis quickened his pace, till in the grey half-light he descried a little one-horse carriage slowly advancing towards him. He could only see one man in it, but, as it came nearer, he saw a heap of clothes, surmounted by what indicated the presence of another in the bottom of the conveyance, and Grog quickly read the incident by the aid of his own anticipation. There, indeed, lay Paul Classon, forgetful of the world and all its cares, his outstretched arm almost touching the wheel, and the heavy wooden shoe of the peasant grazing his face.

"Has he got the letters? Where are they?" cried Davis, eagerly, to the driver.

"They're in his hat."

Grog snatched it rudely from his head and found several letters of various sizes and shapes, and with what, even in that dim light, seemed a variety of addresses and superscriptions.

"Are you certain none have fallen out or been lost on the road?" said Davis, as he reckoned them over.

"That I am," said the man, "for at every jolt of the waggon he used to grip his hat and hold it fast as if it was for very life, till we came to the last village. It was there he finished off with a flask of Laubthaler that completely overcame him."

"So, then, he was sober on leaving Neuweid?"

"He was in the so-called 'bemuzzed' state!" said the man, with a half apologetic air.

"Take him down to the inn: throw him into the hay-yard—or the river, if you like," said Davis, contemptuously, and turned away.

Once in his own room, the candles lighted, the door locked, Davis sat down to the table on which the letters were thrown. Leisurely he took them up one by one and examined their superscriptions.

"Little news in these," said he, throwing three or four to one

side; "the old story—money seeking." And he mumbled out, "Your acceptance being duly presented this day at Messrs. Haggitts and Drudges, and no provision being made for payment of the same——' It's like the burden of an old song in one's ears. Who is this from? Oh, Billy Peach, with some Doncaster news. I do wonder will the day ever come that will bring me good tidings by the post; I've paid many a pound in my life for letters, and I never yet chanced upon one that told me my uncle Peter had just died, leaving me all his estates in Jamaica, or that my aunt Susan bequeathed to me all her Mexican stock and the shares in four tin mines. This is also from Peach, and marked 'immediate,' and he broke it open. It contained only these lines: "'Dark is the word for a week or two still. On Tuesday your name will appear amongst the passengers for New York by the *Persia*. Saucy Sal is a dead break-down, and we net seven hundred safe; Pot did it with a knitting-needle while they were plaiting her. What am I to do about the jewels?'"

Davis's brow darkened as he crushed the paper in his hand, while he muttered, "I wish these infernal fools had not been taught to write! He ought to know, that addressing me Captain Christopher, never deceived a 'Detective' yet. And this is for the Honourable Annesley Beecher," said he, reading aloud the address, "'care of Captain Christopher, Coblenz—try Bingen—try Neuweid.' A responsible-looking document this; it looks like a despatch, with its blue-post paper and massive seal; and what is the name here, in the corner? 'Davenport Dunn,' sure enough—'Davenport Dunn.' And with your leave, Sir, we'll see what you have to say," muttered he, as he broke the seal of the packet. A very brief note first met his eyes; it ran thus:

"DEAR SIR,—While I was just reading a very alarming account of Lord Lackington's illness in a communication from Messrs. Harmer and Gore, the post brought me the enclosed letter for yourself, which I perceive to be in her Ladyship's hand; I forward it at once to Brussels, in the hope that it may reach you there. Should her Ladyship's tidings be better than I can fain persuade myself to hope, may I presume to suggest that you should lose no time in repairing to Italy. I cannot exaggerate the peril of his Lordship's state; in fact, I am hourly expecting news of his death; and, the *peculiar circumstances* of the case considered, it is highly important you should possess yourself of every information the exigencies of the event may require. I beg to enclose you a bank post-bill for two hundred

pounds, payable at any banker's on your signature, and have the honour to be, with sincere respect,

“Your humble Servant,

“DAVENPORT DUNN.

“P.S.—I have reason to know that certain claims are now under consideration, and will be preferred ere long, if suitable measures be not adopted to restrain them.”

“From which side do you hold your brief, Master Davenport Dunn? I should like to know *that!*” said Davis, as he twice over read aloud this postscript. He looked at Lady Lackington's letter, turned it over, examined the seal and the postmark, and seemed to hesitate about breaking it open. Was it that some scruple of conscience arrested his hand, and some mysterious feeling that it was a sisterly confidence he was about to violate? Who knows! At all events, if there was a struggle it was a brief one, for he now smashed the seal and spread the open letter before him.

With a muttered expression of impatience did he glance over the four closely-written pages indited in the very minutest of hands and the faintest possible ink. Like one addressing himself, however, to a severe task, he set steadily to work, and for nigh an hour never rose from the table. We have no right, as little have we the wish, to inflict upon our reader any portion of the labour this process of deciphering cost Davis, so that we will briefly state what formed the substance of the epistle. The letter was evidently begun before Lord Lackington had been taken ill, for it opened with an account of Como and the company at the Villa d'Este, where they had gone to resume the water-cure. Her Ladyship's strictures upon the visitors, their morals, and their manners, were pleasantly and flippantly thrown off. She possessed what would really seem an especial gift of her class—the most marvellous use of the perceptive faculties—and could read not alone rank and condition, but character and individuality, by traits of breeding and manner that would have escaped the notice of hundreds of those the world calls shrewd observers. This fragment, for it was such, was followed, after a fortnight, by a hastily written passage, announcing that Lord Lackington had been seized with an attack resembling apoplexy, and for several hours remained in great danger. She had detained the letter to give the latest tidings before the post closed, and ultimately decided on not despatching it till the next day.

The following morning's communication was a minute account of medical treatment, the bleedings, the blisterings, the watchings, and the anxieties of a sick-bed, with all the vacillating changes that mark the course of malady, concluding with these words: "The doctors are not without hopes, but confess that their confidence is rather based on the great strength and energy of his constitution than upon any success that has attended their treatment, from which I may say that up to this no benefit has accrued. So well as I can interpret his utterance, he seems very anxious to see you, and made an effort to write something to you, which of course he could not accomplish. Come out here, therefore, as quickly as possible; the route by Lucerne is, they tell me, the shortest and speediest. If I were to give my own opinion, it would be, that he is better and stronger than yesterday, but I do not perceive the doctors disposed to take this view." After this came a lengthened statement of medical hopes and fears, balanced with all the subtle minuteness known to "the Faculty." They explained to a nicety how if that poor watch were to stop it could not possibly be from any fault of theirs, but either from some vice in its original construction, or some organic change occasioned by time. They demonstrated, in fact, that great as was their art, it was occasionally baffled, but pointed with a proud humility to the onward progress of science, in the calm assurance that doubtless we should one day know all these things, and treat them as successfully as we now do—I am afraid to say what. One thing, however, was sufficiently clear—Lord Lackington's case was as bad as possible, his recovery almost hopeless. On the turn-down of the last page was the following, written in evident haste, if not agitation: "In opening the letters which have arrived since his illness, I am astonished to find many referring to some suit, either meditated or actually instituted, against our right to the title. Surely some deep game of treachery is at work here. He never once alluded to such a possibility to myself, nor had I the slightest suspicion that any pretended claim existed. One of these letters is from Mr. Davenport Dunn, who has, I can see from the tone in which he writes, been long conversant with the transaction, and as evidently inclines to give it a real or feigned importance. Indeed, he refers to a 'compromise' of some sort or other, and strongly impresses the necessity of not letting the affair proceed further. I am actually distracted by such news coming at such a moment. Surely Lackington could never have been weak enough to yield to mere menace, and have thus encouraged the insolent preten-

sions of this claim? As you pass through London, call at Fordyce's, somewhere in Furnival's Inn, and just in course of conversation, showing your acquaintance with the subject, learn all you can on the matter. Fordyce has all our papers, and must necessarily know what weight is due to these pretensions. Above all, however, hasten out here; there is no saying what any day—any hour—may produce. I have no one here to give me a word of advice, or even consolation; for though Lady Grace is with us, she is so wrapt up in her new theological studies—coquetting with Rome as she has been all the summer—that she is perfectly useless.

"Have you any idea who is Terence Driscoll? Some extraordinary notes bearing this signature, ill-written and ill-spelt, have fallen into my hands as I rummaged amongst the papers, and they are all full of this claim. It is but too plain Lackington suffered these people to terrify him, and this Driscoll's tone is a mixture of the meanest subserviency and outrageous impertinence. It is not unlikely Fordyce may know him. Of course, I need not add one word of caution against your mention of this affair, even to those of your friends with whom you are in closest intimacy. It is really essential not a hint of it should get abroad.

"I have little doubt now, looking back on the past, that anxiety and care about this matter have had a large share in bringing on Lackington's attack. He had been sleepless and uneasy for some time back, showing an eagerness, too, about his letters, and the greatest impatience if any accident delayed the post. Although all my maturer thoughts—indeed, my convictions—reject attaching any importance to this claim, I will not attempt to conceal from you how unhappy it has made me, nor how severely it has affected my nerves."

With one more urgent appeal to lose not an hour in hastening over the Alps, the letter concluded; the single word "weaker," apparently written after the letter was sealed, giving a deep meaning to the whole.

Davis was not satisfied with one perusal of the latter portion of this letter, but read it over carefully a second time; after which, taking a sheet of paper, he wrote down the names of Fordyce and Terence Driscoll. He then opened a Directory, and running his eye down a column, came to "Fordyce and Fraude, 7, Furnival's Inn, solicitors." Of Terence Driscolls there were seventeen, but all in trade, tanners, tinmen, last-makers, wharfingers, and so on; not one upon whom Davis could

fix the likelihood of the correspondence with the Viscount. He then walked the room, cigar in mouth, for about an hour, after which he sat down and wrote the note to Beecher which we have given in a former chapter, with directions to call upon Stein, the money-lender, and then hasten away from Aix as speedily as possible. This finished, he addressed another and somewhat longer epistle to Lazarus Stein himself, of which latter document this true history has no record.

We perhaps owe an apology to our reader for inverting in our narrative the actual order of these events. It might possibly have been more natural to have preceded the account of Beecher's reception of the letter by the circumstances we have just detailed. We selected the present course, however, to avoid the necessity of that continual change of scene, alike wearisome to him who reads as to him who writes; and, as we are about to sojourn in Mr. Davis's company for some time to come, we have deferred the explanation to a time when it should form part of a regular series of events. Nor are we sorry at the opportunity of asking the reader to turn once again to that brief note, and mark its contents. Though Davis was fully impressed with the conviction that Lord Lackington's days were numbered, though he felt that, at any moment, some chance rumour, some flying report, might inform Beecher what great change was about to come over his fortunes, yet this note is written in all the seeming carelessness of a gossiping humour: he gives the latest news of the Turf, he alludes to Beecher's new entanglements at home, to his own newly-discovered martingale for the play-table, trusting to the one line about "Benson's people" to make Beecher hasten away from Aix, and from the chance of hearing that his brother was hopelessly ill. While Grog penned these lines he would have given—if he had it—ten thousand pounds that Beecher was beside him. Ay, willingly had he given it, and more too, that Beecher might be where no voice could whisper to him the marvellous change that any moment might cause in his destiny. Oh, ye naturalists, who grow poetical over the grub and the butterfly, what is there, I ask ye, in the transformation at all comparable with that when the younger brother, the man of strait and small fortune, springs into the Peer, exchanging a life of daily vicissitudes, cheap dinners and duns, dubious companionships and high discounts, for the assured existence, the stately banquets, the proud friendships, the pomp and circumstance of a Lord? In a moment he soars out of the troubled atmosphere of debts and disabilities, and floats into the balmy

region whose very sorrows never wear an unbecoming mourning.

Grog's note was thus a small specimen of what the great Talleyrand used to call the perfection of despatch writing, "not the best thing that could be said on the subject, but simply that which would produce the effect you desired." Having sent off this to Beecher, he then telegraphed to his man of business, Mr. Peach, to ascertain at Fordyce's the latest accounts of Lord Lackington's health, and answer "by wire."

It was far into the night when Davis betook himself to bed, but not to sleep. The complications of the great game he was playing had for him all the interest of the play-table. The kind of excitement he gloried in was to find himself pitted against others—wily, subtle, and deep-scheming as himself—to see some great stake on the board, and to feel that it must be the prize of the best player. With the gambler's superstition, he kept constantly combining events with dates and eras, recalling what of good or ill-luck had marked certain periods of his life. He asked himself if September had usually been a fortunate month? did the 20th imply anything? what influence might Holy Paul exert over his destiny? was he merely unlucky himself, or did he bring evil fortune upon others? If he suffered himself to dwell upon such "vain auguries" as these, they still exerted little other sway over his mind than to nerve it to greater efforts; in fact, he consulted these signs as a physician might investigate certain symptoms, which, if not of moment enough to call for special treatment, were yet indicative of hidden mischief.

His gambling experiences had given him the ready tact, by a mere glance around the table, to recognise those with whom the real struggle should be waged; to detect, in a second, the deep head, the crafty intelligence—that marvellous blending of caution with rashness that make the gamester; and in the same spirit he now turned over in thought each of those with whom he was now about to contend, and muttered the name of Davenport Dunn over and over. "Could we only 'hit it off' together, what a game might we not play!" was his last reflection ere he fell off to sleep.

CHAPTER LXX.

A DISCURSIVE CONVERSATION.

DAVIS was surprised, and something more, as he entered the breakfast-room the next morning to find the Rev. Paul Classon already seated at the table, calmly arranging certain little parallelograms of bread-and-butter and sardines. No signs of discomfiture or shame showed themselves in that calmly benevolent countenance. Indeed, as he arose and extended his hand, there was an air of bland protection in the gesture perfectly soothing.

"You came back in a pretty state last night," said Davis, roughly.

"Overtaken, Kit, overtaken. It was a piece of good news rather than the grape juice did the mischief. As the poet says,

"'Good tidings flowed upon his heart
Like a sea o'er a barren shore,
And the pleasant waves refreshed the spot
So parched and bleak before.'

The fact is, Kit, you brought me luck. Just as I reached the post-office, I saw a letter addressed to the Rev. Paul Classon, announcing that I had been accepted as Chaplain to the great Hydropathic Institution at Como! and, to commemorate the event, I celebrated in wine the triumphs of water! You got the letters all safely?"

"Little thanks to you if I did; nor am I yet certain how many may have dropped out on the road."

"Stay—I have a memorandum here," said Paul, opening his little note-book. "Four, with London post-marks, to Captain

Christopher; two from Brussels for the same; a large packet for the Hon. Annesley Beecher. That's the whole list."

"I got these!" said Grog, gruffly; "but why, might I ask, could you not have kept sober till you got back here?"

"He who dashes his enthusiasms with caution, waters the liquor of life. How do we soar above the common ills of existence save by yielding to those glorious impulses of the heart, which say, 'Be happy!'"

"Keep the sermon for the cripples at the water-cure," said Davis, savagely. "When are you to be there?"

"By the end of the month. I mentioned the time myself. It would be as soon, I thought, as I could manage to have my divinity library out from England."

The sly drollery of his eye as he spoke almost extorted a half-smile from Davis.

"Let me see," muttered Grog, as he arose and lighted his cigar, "we are, to-day, the 21st, I believe. No, you can't be there so early. I shall need you somewhere about the first week in October; it might chance to be earlier. You mustn't remain here, however, in the interval. You'll have to find some place in the neighbourhood, about fifteen or twenty miles off."

"There's Höchst, on the Lahn, a pleasant spot, eighteen miles from this."

"Höchst be it; but, mark me, no more of last night's doings."

"I pledge my word," said Paul, solemnly. "Need I say, it is as good as my bond?"

"About the same, I suspect; but I'll give you *mine*, too," said Davis, with a fierce energy. "If by any low dissipation or indiscretion of yours you thwart the plans I am engaged in, I'll leave you to starve out the rest of your life here."

"So swear we all as liegemen true,
So swear to live and die!"

cried out Paul, with a most theatrical air in voice and gesture.

"You know a little of everything, I fancy," said Davis, in a more good-humoured tone. "What do you know of law?"

"Of law?" said Paul, as he helped himself to a dish of smoking cutlets—"if it be the law of debtor and creditor, false arrest, forcible possession, battery, or fraudulent bankruptcy, I am indifferently well skilled. Nor am I ignorant in divorce cases, separate maintenance, and right of guardianship. Equity, I should say, is my weak point."

"I believe you," said Davis, with a grin, for he but imperfectly understood the speech. "But it is of another kind of law I'm speaking. What do you know about disputed title to a Peerage? Have you any experience in such cases?"

"Yes; I have ransacked registries—rummaged out grave-stones in my time. I very nearly burned my fingers, too, with a baptismal certificate that turned out to be—what shall I call it?—unauthentic!"

"You forged it!" said Grog, gruffly.

"They disputed its correctness, and possibly with some grounds for their opinion. Indeed," added he, carelessly, "it was the first thing of the kind I had ever done, and it was slovenly—slovenly."

"It would have been transportation!" said Davis, gravely.

"With hard labour," added Classon, sipping his tea.

"At all events, you understand something of these sort of cases?"

"Yes; I have been concerned, one way or another, with five. They are interesting when you take to them; there are so many, so to say, surprises—always something turning up you never looked for—somebody's father that never had a child—somebody's mother that never was married. Then people die—say a hundred and fifty years ago—and no proof of the death can be made out; or you build wonderfully upon an act of Parliament, and only find out at the last hour that it had been repealed. These traits give a great deal of excitement to the suit. I used to enjoy them much when I was younger?" And Mr. Classon sighed as if he had been calling up memories of cricket-matches, steeple-chases, or the polka—pleasures that advancing years had rudely robbed him of.

Davis sat deep in thought for some time. Either he had not fully made up his mind to open an unreserved confidence with his reverend friend, or, which is perhaps as likely, he was not in possession of such knowledge as might enable him to state his case.

"These suits, or actions, or whatever you call them," said he, at length, "always drag on for years—don't they?"

"Of course they do; the lawyers take care of that. There are trials at bar, commissions, special examinations before the Masters, arguments before the Peers, appeals against decisions; in fact, it is a question of the purse of the litigants. Like everything else, however, in this world, they've got economy-struck. I remember the time—it was the Bancroft case—they

gave me five guineas a day and travelling expenses to go out to Ravenna and take the deposition of an old Marchesa, half-sister of the Dowager, and now, I suppose, they'd say the service was well paid with one-half. Indeed, I may say I had as good as accepted a sort of engagement to go out to the Crimea and examine a young fellow whom they fancy has a claim to a Peerage, and for a mere trifle—fifteen shillings a day and expenses. But they had got my passport stopped here, and I couldn't get away."

"What was the name of the claimant?"

"Here it is," said he, opening his note-book. "Charles Conway, formerly in the 11th Hussars, supposed to be serving as orderly on the staff of General *La Marmora*. I have a long letter of instructions Froode forwarded me, and I suspect it is a strong case got up to intimidate."

"What is the Peerage sought for?" asked Davis, with an assumed indifference.

"I can tell you in five minutes if you have any curiosity on the subject," said Paul rising. "The papers are all in my writing-desk."

"Fetch them," said Davis, as he walked to the window and looked out.

Classon soon re-entered the room with a large open letter in his hand.

"There's the map of the country!" said he, throwing it down on the table. "What would you call the fair odds in such a case, Kit—a private soldier's chance of a Peerage that has been undisturbed since Edward the Third?"

"About ten thousand to one, I'd call it."

"I agree with you, particularly since Froode is in it. He only takes up these cases to make a compromise. They're always 'settled.' He's a wonderful fellow to sink the chambers and charge the mine, but he never explodes—never!"

"So that Froode can always be squared, eh?" asked Davis.

"Always." Classon now ran his eyes over the letter, and, mumbling the lines half aloud, said, "'In which case the Conways of Abergeldy, deriving from the second son, would take precedence of the Beecher branch.' The case is this," added he, aloud: "Viscount Lackington's Peerage was united to the estates by an act of Edward; a motion for a repeal of this was made in Elizabeth's time, and lost—some aver the reverse; now the claimant, Conway, relies upon the original act, since in pursuit of the estates he invalidates the title. It's a case to extort

money, and a good round sum, too. I'd say Lord Lackington might give twenty thousand to have all papers and documents of the claim surrendered into his hands."

"A heavy sum, twenty thousand," muttered Davis, slowly.

"So it is, Kit; but when you come to tot up suits at Nisi Prius, suits in Equity, searches at the Heralds' Office, and hearings before the Lords, you'll see it is a downright saving."

"But could Lackington afford this? What is he worth?"

"They call the English property twelve thousand a year, and he has a small estate in Ireland besides. In fact, it is out of that part of the property the mischief has come. This Conway's claim was discovered in some old country house there, and Froode is only partially instructed in it."

"And now, Paul," said Davis, slowly, "if you got a commission to square this here affair and make all comfortable, how would you go about it?"

"Acting for which party, do you mean?" asked Paul.

"I mean for the Lackingtons."

"Well, there are two ways. I'd send for Froode, and say, 'What's the lowest figure for the whole?' or I'd despatch a trusty fellow to the Crimea to watch Conway, and see what approaches they are making to him. Of course they'll send a man out there, and it oughtn't to be hard to get hold of him, or, if not himself, of all his papers and instructions."

"That looks business-like," said Grog, encouragingly.

"After all, Kit, these things, in ninety-nine cases out of the hundred, are only snaps of the percussion-cap. There's scarcely a Peerage in England is not menaced with an attempt of the kind; but such is the intermarriage—such the close tie of affinity between them—they stand manfully to the fellow in possession. They know in their hearts, if once they let the world begin to pick out a stone here or there, the whole wall may come tumbling down, and so they say, 'Here's one of us since Henry II.'s time going to be displaced for some upstart fellow none of us ever heard of.' What signifies legitimacy that dates seven centuries back, in favour of one probably a shoemaker, or a house-painter? They won't stand that, Kit, and reasonably enough, too. I suppose you've heard all about this case from Beecher?"

"Well, I *have* heard something about it," said Grog, in confusion, for the suddenness of the question disconcerted him, "but ~~he~~ I don't care about it."

"Very likely not. If Lackington were to have a son, it wouldn't concern him much."

"Not alone that, but he doesn't attach any importance to the claim; he says it's all got up to extort money."

"What of that? When a highwayman stops you with the same errand, doesn't the refusal occasionally provoke him to use force? I know very few things so hard to deal with as menaces to extort money. Life is, after all, very like the game the Americans call 'Poker,' where the grand secret is, never to 'brag' too far on a bad hand. What was *your* part in this business, Kit?" asked he, after a brief silence.

"How do you mean by *my* part?" rejoined Davis, gruffly.

"I mean, how were you interested? Do you hold any of Lackington's paper?—have you got any claims on the reversion?—in a word, does it in any way concern you which king reigns in Israel?"

"It might, or it might not," said Grog, dryly. "Now for a question to *you*. Could you manage to get employed in the affair—to be sent out after this Conway—or is it too late?"

"It might, or it might not," said Classon, with a significant imitation of the other's tone and manner. Davis understood the sarcasm in a moment, and in a voice of some irritation, said,

"Don't you try to come the whip-hand over *me*, Holy Paul. If there be anything to do in this matter, it is *I*, and not *you*, will be paymaster; so much for this, so much for that—there's the terms!"

"It is such dealings I like best," said Classon, blandly. "Men would have benefited largely in this world had Probity been parcelled out as task-work instead of being made daily labour."

"I suspect that neither you nor I would have had much employment either way," said Davis, with a bitter laugh. "But come, you must be stirring. You'll have to be off out of this before the afternoon. The Rhine steamer touches at Neuweid at three, and I expect my daughter by this boat. I don't want her to see you just yet awhile, Paul. You'll start for Höchst, put up at the inn there, and communicate with me at once, so that I may be able to reckon upon you when needed. It were as well, too, that you'd write a line to Froode, and say, that on second thoughts that expedition to the Crimea might suit; explore the way, in fact, and let me know the tidings. As to terms," said Grog—for the other's blank look expressed hesitation—"if *I* say, 'Go,' *you* shall say, 'For what?'"

"I do love these frank and open dealings," said Paul, warmly.

"Look here," said Davis, as the other was about to leave the room: "old Joe Morris, of Mincing-lane, made his fortune by

buying up all the forged bills of exchange he could lay hands on, well knowing that the fellows he could hang or transport any way would be trusty allies. Now, I have all my life committed every critical thing to somebody or other that no other living man would trust with a sixpence. They stood to *me* as I stood to *them*, and they knew why. Need I tell you that why?"

"No necessity in the world to do so," said Paul, blandly.

"That's enough," said Davis. "Come to me when you're ready, and I'll have some cash for you."

CHAPTER LXXI.

A FAMILY MEETING.

ALONG a road pleasantly shaded by linden-trees, Davis strolled leisurely that afternoon to meet his daughter. It was a mellow, autumnal day—calm, silent, and half sombre—one of those days in which the tranquil aspect of nature has an influence of sad but soothing import, and even the least meditative minds are led to reflection. Down the deep valley, where the clear trout stream eddied along, while the leafy chesnut-trees threw their shadows over the water; over the rich pasture-lands, where the spotted cattle roamed; high up the blue mountains, whose snowy summits mingled with the clouds, Davis wandered with his eyes, and felt, he knew not why or how, a something of calming, subduing effect upon a brain racked with many a scheme—wearied with many a plot.

As he gazed down upon that fair scene where form and colour and odour were blended into one beauteous whole, a struggling effort of fancy sent through his mind the question, "Is this, after all, the real prize of life? Is this peaceful existence worth all the triumphs that we strive and fight for?" And then came the thought, "Could this be lasting, what would a nature like mine become, thus left in rust and disuse? Could I live? or should I enjoy life without that eternal hand-to-hand conflict with my fellow-men, on which skill and ready wit are exercised?" He pondered long over this notion, nor could he satisfy himself with any conclusion.

He thought he could remember a time when he would thoroughly have liked all this—when he could have taken leave of the busy world without one regret, and made the great race of life a mere "walk over;" now that he had

tasted the poisonous fascination of that combat, where man is pitted against man, and where even the lust of gain is less stimulating than a deadly sense of jealous rivalry, it was too late—too late! How strange, too, did it seem to him, as he looked back upon his wild and stormy life, with all its perils and all its vicissitudes, to think that an existence so calm, so uneventful, and so safe, could yet be had—that a region existed where craft could find no exercise, where subtlety might be in disuse! It was to him like a haven that he was rejoiced to know—a harbour whose refuge, some one day or other, he would search out; but there was yet one voyage to make—one grand venture—which, if successful, would be the crowning fortune of his life!

The sharp crack crack of a postilion's whip started him from his musings, and, looking up, he saw a post-carriage approaching at full speed. He waved his hat as the carriage came near for the men to draw up, and the next moment Lizzy Davis was in her father's arms. He kissed her twice, and then, holding her back, gazed with proud delight at her beautiful features, never more striking than in that moment of joyful meeting.

"How well you are looking, Lizzy!" said he, with a thick utterance.

"And you too, dear Papa," said she, caressingly. "This quiet rural life seems to have agreed wonderfully with you. I declare you look five years younger for it, does he not, Mr. Beecher?"

"Ah, Beecher, how are you?" cried Davis, warmly shaking the other's hand. "This is jolly, to be all together again," said he, as, drawing his daughter's arm within his own, and taking Beecher on the other side, he told the postilions to move forward, while they would find their way on foot.

"How did you ever hit upon this spot?" asked Beecher; "we couldn't find it on the map."

"I came through here some four-and-twenty years ago, and I never forget a place, nor a countenance. I thought at the time it might suit me, some one day or other, to remember, and you see I was right. You are grown fatter, Lizzy; at least I fancy so. But come, tell me about your life at Aix—was it pleasant? was the place gay?"

"It was charming, Papa!" cried she, in ecstasy; "had you only been with us, I could not have come away. Such delightful rides and drives, beautiful environs, and then the Cursaal of an evening, with all its odd people—not that my guardian, here, fancied so much my laughing at them."

"Well, you didn't place much restraint upon yourself, I must say."

"I was reserved even to prudery; I was the caricature of Anglo-Saxon propriety," said she, with affected austerity.

"And what did they think of you, eh?" asked Davis, trying to subdue the pride that would, in spite of him, twinkle in his eye.

"I was the belle of the season. I assure you it is perfectly true!"

"Come, come, Lizzy——"

"Well, ask Mr. Beecher. Be honest now, and confess frankly, were you not sulky at driving out with me the way the people stared? Didn't you complain that you never expected to come home from the play without a duel, or something of the kind, on your hands? Did you not induce me to ruin my toilette just to escape what you so delicately called 'our notoriety?' Oh, wretched man! what triumphs did I not relinquish out of compliance to your taste for obscurity!"

"By Jove! we divided public attention with Ferouk Khan and his wives. I don't see that my taste for obscurity obtained any brilliant success."

"I never heard of such black ingratitude!" cried she, in mock indignation. "I assure you, Pa, I was a martyr to his English notions, which, to *me*, seem to have had their origin in Constantinople."

"Poor Beecher!" said Davis, laughingly.

"Poor Beecher, no, but happy Beecher, envied by thousands. Not, indeed," added she, with a smile, "that his appearance at this moment suggests any triumphant satisfaction. Oh, Papa, you should have seen him when the Russian Prince Ezerboffsky asked me to dance, or when the Archduke Albrecht offered me his horses; or, better still, the evening the Margrave lighted up his conservatory just to let me see it."

"Your guardianship had its anxieties, I perceive," said Davis, dryly.

"I think it had," said Beecher, sighing. "There were times I'd have given five thousand, if I had it, that she had been safe under your own charge."

"My dear fellow, I'd have given fifty," said Davis, "if I didn't know she was just in as good hands as my own." There was a racy heartiness in this speech that thrilled through Beecher's heart, and he could scarcely credit his ears that it was Grog spoke it. "Ay, Beecher," added he, as he drew the other's arm closer to his side, "there was just one man—one single man in Europe—I'd have trusted with the charge."

"Really, gentlemen," said Lizzy, with a malicious sparkle of the eye, "I am lost in my conjectures whether I am to regard myself as a sort of human Koo-i-noor—a priceless treasure—or something so very difficult to guard, so perilous to protect, as can scarcely be accounted a flattery. Say, I entreat of you, to which category do I belong?"

"A little to each, I should say—eh, Beecher?" cried Grog, laughingly.

"Oh, don't appeal to *him*, Papa. *He* only wants to vaunt his heroism the higher, because the fortress he guarded was so easy of assault!"

Beecher was ill fitted to engage in such an encounter, and stammered out some commonplace apology for his own seeming want of gallantry.

"She's too much for us, Beecher—too much for us. It's a pace we can't keep up," muttered Grog in the other's ear. And Beecher nodded a ready assent to the speech.

"Well," said Lizzy, gaily, "now that your anxieties are well over, I do entreat of you to unbend a little, and let us see the lively, light-hearted Mr. Annesley Beecher, of whose pleasant ways I have heard so much."

"I used to be light-hearted enough, once, eh, Davis?" said Beecher, with a sigh. "When you saw me first at the Derby—of let me see, I don't remember the year, but it was when Danby's mare Petrilla won—with eighteen to one 'given and taken' against her, the day of the race—Brown Davy, the favourite, coming in a bad third—he died the same night."

"Was he 'nobbled?'" asked Lizzy, dryly.

"What do you mean?" cried Grog, gruffly. "Where did you learn that word?"

"Oh, I'm quite strong in your choice vocabulary," said she, laughingly; "and you are not to fancy that in the dissipations of Aix I have forgotten the cares of my education. My guardian there set me a task every morning—a page of Burke's Peerage and a column of the *Racing Calendar*; and for the ninth Baron of Fitzfoodle, or the fifteenth winner of the Diddlesworth, you may call on me at a moment."

The angry shadow on Davis's brow gradually faded away, and he laughed a real, honest, and good-humoured laugh.

"What do you say to the Count, Lizzy?" asked he next. "There was a fine gentleman, wasn't he?"

"There was the ease and the self-possession of good breeding without the manners. He was amusing from his own self-con-

tent, and a sort of latent impression that he was taking you in; and when one got tired of that, he became downright stupid."

"True as a book, every word of it!" cried Beecher, in hearty gratitude, for he detested the man, and was envious of his small accomplishments.

"His little caressing ways, too, ceased to be flatteries, when you saw that, like the cheap bonbons scattered at a carnival, they were made for the million."

"Hit him again, he hasn't got no friends!" said Beecher, with an assumed slang in his tone.

"But worst of all was that mockery of good-nature—a false air of kindness about him. It was a spurious coinage, so cleverly devised that you looked at every good guinea afterwards with distrust."

"How she knows him—how she reads him!" cried Davis, in delight.

"He was very large print, Papa," said she, smiling.

"Confound me!" cried Beecher, "if I didn't think you liked him, you used to receive him so graciously; and I'll wager he thinks himself a prime favourite with you."

"So he may, if it give him any pleasure," said she, with a careless laugh.

Davis marked the expression of Beecher's face as she said these words; he saw how that distrustful nature was alarmed, and he hastened to repair the mischief.

"I am sure you never affected to feel any regard for him, Lizzy?" said Davis.

"Regard for him!" said she, haughtily; "I should think not! Such people as he are like the hired horses that every one uses, and only asks that they should serve for the day they have taken them."

"There, Beecher," said Davis, with a laugh. "I sincerely hope she's not going to discuss *your* character or *mine*."

"By Jove! I hope not." And in the tone in which Beecher uttered this there was an earnestness that made the other laugh heartily.

"Well, here we are. This is your home for the present," said Davis, as he welcomed them to the little inn, whose household were all marshalled to receive them with fitting deference.

The arrangements within doors were even better than the picturesque exterior promised, and when Lizzy came down to dinner she was in raptures about her room, its neatness even to

elegance, and the glorious views that opened before the windows.

"I'm splendidly lodged, too," said Beecher; "and they have given me a dressing-room, with a little winding stair to the river, and a bath in the natural rock. It is downright luxury, all this."

Davis smiled contentedly as he listened. For days past had he been busied with these preparations, determined to make the spot appear in all its most favourable colours. Let us do him the justice to own that his cares met a full success. Flowers abounded in all the rooms, and the perfumed air, made to seem tremulous by the sounds of falling water, was inexpressibly calming after the journey. The dinner, too, would have done honour to a more pretentious "hostel;" and the Steinberger, a cabinet wine, that the host would not part with except for "love as well as money," was perfection. Better than all these—better than the fresh trout with its gold and azure speckles—better than the delicate Rehbraten with its luscious sauce—better than the red partridges in their bed of truffles, and a dessert whose grapes rivalled those of Fontainebleau,—better, I say, than all, was the happy temper of the hour! Never were three people more disposed for enjoyment. To Lizzy, it was the oft dreamed-of home, the quiet repose of a spot surrounded with all the charm of scenery, coming, too, just as the dissipations of gaiety had begun to weary and pall upon her. To Beecher, it was the first moment of all his life in which he tasted peace. Here were neither duns nor bailiffs. It was a Paradise where no writ had ever wandered, nor the word "outlawry" had ever been uttered. As for Davis, if he had not actually won his game, he held in his hand the trump card that he knew must gain it. What signified, now, a day or even a week more or less; the labour of his long ambition was all but completed, and he saw the goal reached that he had striven for years to attain.

Nor were they less pleased with each other. Never had Lizzy seemed to Beecher's eyes more fascinating than now. In all the blaze of full dress she never looked more beautiful than in that simple muslin, with the sky-blue ribbon in her glossy hair, and the bouquet of moss roses coquettishly placed above her ear, for—I mention it out of accuracy—she wore her hair drawn back, as was the mode about a century ago, and was somewhat ingenious in her imitation of that mock-shepherdess "coiffure" so popular with fine ladies of that time. She would have ventured on a "patch" if it were not out of fear for her father; not, indeed, that the delicate fairness of her skin, or the dazzling brilliancy

of her eyes, needed the slightest aid from art. Was it with some eye to keeping a toilette that she wore a profusion of rings, many of great price and beauty? I know not her secret; if I did, I should assuredly tell it, for I suspect none of her coquetties were without their significance. To complete Beecher's satisfaction, Davis was in a mood of good humour, such as he had never seen before. Not a word of contradiction—not one syllable of disparagement fell from his lips, that Beecher usually watched with an almost childish terror, dreading reproof at every moment, and not being over certain when his opinions would pass without a censure. Instead of this, Grog was conciliating even to gentleness, constantly referred to Beecher what he thought of this or that, and even deferred to his better judgment on points whereon he might have been supposed to be more conversant. Much valued reader, has it ever been your fortune in life to have had your opinions on law blandly approved of by an ex-Chancellor, your notions of medicine courteously confirmed by a great Physician, or your naval tactics endorsed by an Admiral of the Fleet? If so, you can fully appreciate the ecstasy of Annesley Beecher as he found all his experiences of the sporting world corroborated by the "Court above." This was the gold medal he had set his heart on for years—this the great prize of all his life; and now he had won it, and he was really a "sharp fellow." There is an intense delight in the thought of having realised a dream of ambition, of which, while our own hearts gave us the assurance of success, the world at large only scoffed at our attempting. To be able to say, "Yes, here I am, despite all your forebodings and all your predictions—I knew it was 'in me!'" is a very proud thing, and such a moment of vaingloriousness is pardonable enough.

How enjoyable at such a moment of triumph was it to hear Lizzy sing and play, making that miserable old piano discourse in a guise it had never dreamed of! She was in one of those moods wherein she blended the wildest flights of fancy with dashes of quaint humour, now, breathing forth a melody of Spohr's in accents of thrilling pathos, now, hitting off in improvised doggrel a description of Aix and its company, with mimicries of their voice and manner irresistibly droll. In these imitations the Count, and even Beecher himself, figured, till Grog, fairly worn out with laughter, had to entreat her to desist.

As for Beecher, he was a good-tempered fellow, and the little raillery at himself took nothing from the pleasure of the description, and he laughed in ready acknowledgment of many

a little trait of his own manner that he never suspected could have been detected by another.

"Ain't she wonderful—ain't she wonderful?" exclaimed Grog, as she strolled out into the garden, and left them alone together.

"What I can't make out is, she has no blank days," said Beecher. "She was just as you saw her there, the whole time we were at Aix; and while she's rattling away at the piano, and going on with all manner of fun, just ask her a serious question—I don't care about what—and she'll answer you as if she had been thinking of nothing else for the whole day before."

"Had she been born in *your* rank of life, Beecher, where would she be now—tell me that?" said Davis; and there was an almost fierce energy in the words as he spoke them.

"I can tell you one thing," cried Beecher, in a transport of delight, "there's no rank too high for her this minute."

"Well said, boy—well said," exclaimed Davis, warmly; "and here's to her health."

"That generous toast and cheer must have been in honour of myself," said Lizzy, peeping in at the window; "and in acknowledgment I beg to invite you both to tea."

CHAPTER LXXII.

A SAUNTER BY MOONLIGHT.

LIZZY DAVIS had retired to her room, somewhat weary after the day's journey, not altogether unexcited by her meeting with her father. How was it that there was a gentleness, almost a tenderness, in his manner she had never known before? The short, stern address, the abrupt question, the stare piercing and defiant of one who seemed ever to distrust what he heard, were all replaced by a tone of quiet and easy confidence, and a look that bespoke perfect trustfulness.

"Have I only seen him hitherto in moments of trial and excitement? are these the real traits of his nature? is it the hard conflict of life calls forth the sterner features of his character? and might he, in happier circumstances, be ever kind and confiding, as I see him now?" What a thrill of ecstasy did the thought impart! What a realisation of the home she had often dreamed of! "He mistakes me, too," said she aloud, "if he fancies that my heart is set upon some high ambition. A life of quiet obscurity, in some spot peaceful and unknown as this, would suffice for all my wishes. I want no triumphs—I covet no rivalries." A glance at herself in the glass, at this moment, sent the deep colour to her cheek, and she blushed deeply. Was it that those bright, flashing eyes, that fair and haughty brow, and those lips tremulous with proud significance, gave a denial to these words? Indeed, it seemed as much, for she quickly added, "Not that I would fly the field, or ingloriously escape the struggle——Who's there?" cried she, quickly, as a low tap came to the door.

"It is I, Lizzy. I heard you still moving about, and I thought I'd propose half an hour's stroll in the moonlight before bed. What do you say to it?"

"I should like it of all things, Papa," cried she, opening the door at once.

"Throw a shawl across your shoulders, child," said he; "the air is not always free from moisture. We'll go along by the riverside."

A bright moon in a sky without a cloud lit up the landscape, and by the strongly-marked contrast of light and shadow imparted a most striking effect to a scene wild, broken, and irregular. Fantastically shaped rocks broke the current of the stream; at every moment gnarled and twisted roots straggled along the shelving banks, and in the uncertain light assumed goblin shapes and forms, the plashing stream, as it rushed by, appearing to give motion to the objects around. Nor was the semblance all unreal, for here and there a pliant branch rose and fell on the surging water like the arm of some drowning swimmer.

The father and daughter walked along for some time in utter silence, the thoughts of each filled with the scene before them. Lizzy fancied it was a conflict of river gods—some great Titanic war, where angry giants were the combatants; or, again, as fairer forms succeeded, they seemed a group of nymphs bathing in the soft moonlight. As for Grog, it reminded him of a row at Ascot, where the swell-mob smashed the police; and so strikingly did it call up the memory of the event, that he laughed aloud, and heartily.

"Do tell me what you are laughing at, Pa," said she, entreatingly.

"It was something that I saw long ago—something I was reminded of by those trees yonder, bobbing up and down with the current."

"But what was it?" asked she, more eagerly; for even yet the memory kept him laughing.

"Nothing that could interest you, girl," said he bluntly; and then, as if ashamed of the rudeness of his speech, he added, "though I have seen a good deal of life, Lizzy, there's but little of it I could recal for either your benefit or instruction."

Lizzy was silent; she wished him to speak on, but did not choose to question him. Strangely enough, too, though he shunned the theme, he had been glad if she had led him on to talk of it.

After a long pause he sighed heavily, and said, "I suppose every one, if truth were told, would have rather a sad tale to tell of the world when he comes to my age. It don't improve

upon acquaintance, I promise you. Not that I want to discourage *you* about it, my girl. You'll come to my way of thinking one of these days, and it will be quite soon enough."

"And have you really found men so false and worthless as you say?"

"I'll tell you in one word the whole story, Lizzy. The fellows that are born to a good station and good property are all fair and honest, if they like it; the rest of the world must be rogues, whether they like it or not."

"This is a very disenchanting picture you put before me."

"Here's how it is, girl," said he, warming with his subject. "Every man in the world is a gambler; let him rail against dice, racing, cards, or billiards, he has a game of his own in his heart, and he's playing for a seat in the Cabinet, a place in the colonies, a Bishopric, or the command of a regiment. The difference is, merely, that your regular play-man admits chance into his calculations, the other fellows don't; they pit pure skill against the table, and trust to their knowledge of the game."

She sighed deeply, but did not speak.

"And the women are the same," resumed he; "some scheming to get their husbands high office, some intriguing for honours or Court favour—all of them ready to do a sharp thing—to make a hit on the Stock Exchange."

"And are there none above these mean and petty subterfuges?" cried she, indignantly.

"Yes; the few I have told you—they who come into the world to claim the stakes. They can afford to be high-minded, and generous, and noble-hearted, as much as they please. They are booked 'all right,' and need never trouble their heads about the race; and that is the real reason, girl, why these men have an ascendancy over all others. They are not driven to scramble for a place—they have no struggles to encounter—the crowd makes way for them as they want to pass; and if they have anything good, ay, or even good-looking, about them, what credit don't they get for it."

"But surely there must be many a lowly walk where a man with contentment can maintain himself honourably, and even proudly?"

"I don't know of them, if there be," said Davis, sulkily. "Lawyers, parsons, merchants, are all, I fancy, pretty much alike—all on 'the dodge.'"

"And Beecher—poor Beecher?" broke in Lizzy. And there

was a blended pity and tenderness in the tone that made it very difficult to say what her question really implied.

"Why do you call him poor Beecher?" asked he, quickly. "He ain't so poor in one sense of the word."

"It was in no allusion to his fortune I spoke. I was thinking of him solely with reference to his character."

"And he is poor Beecher, is he, then?" asked Davis, half sternly.

If she did not reply, it was rather in the fear of offending her father, whose manner, so suddenly changing, apprised her of an interest in the subject she had never suspected.

"Look here, Lizzy," said he, drawing her arm more closely to his side, while he bespoke her attention; "men born in Beecher's class don't need to be clever, they have no necessity for the wiles, and schemes, and subtleties, that—that fellows like myself, in short, must practise. What they want is good address, pleasing manners—all the better if they be good-looking. It don't require genius to write a cheque on one's banker; there is no great talent needed to say 'Yes,' or 'No,' in the House of Lords. The world—I mean their own world—likes them all the more if they haven't got great abilities. Now Beecher is just the fellow to suit them."

"He is not a Peer, surely?" asked she, hastily.

"No, he ain't yet, but he may be one any day. He is as sure of the Peerage as—I am not! and then, poor Beecher—as you called him a while ago—becomes the Lord Viscount Lackington, with twelve or fourteen thousand a year! I tell you, girl, that of all the trades men follow, the very best, to enjoy life, is to be an English Lord with a good fortune."

"And is it true, as I have read," asked Lizzy, "that this high station, so fenced around by privileges, is a prize open to all who have talent or ability to deserve it? That men of humble origin, if they be gifted with high qualities, and devote them ardently to their country's service, are adopted from time to time into that noble brotherhood?"

"All rubbish; don't believe a word of it. It's a flam and a humbug—a fiction like the old story about an Englishman's house being his castle, or that balderdash, 'no man need criminate himself.' They're always inventing 'wise saws' like these in England, and they get abroad and are believed at last, just by dint of repeating. Here's the true state of the case," said he, coming suddenly to a halt, and speaking with greater emphasis. "Here I stand, Christopher Davis, with as much wit under the

crown of my hat as any noble lord on the woolsack, and I might just as well try to turn myself into a horse and be first favourite for the Oaks, as attempt to become a peer of Great Britain. It ain't to be done, girl—it ain't to be done!”

“But, surely, I have heard of men suddenly raised to rank and title for the services——”

“So you do. They want a clever lawyer, now and then, to help them on with a peerage case; or, if the country grows forgetful of them, they attract some notice by asking a lucky general to join them; and even then they do it the way a set of old ladies would offer a seat in the coach to a stout-looking fellow on a road beset with robbers—they hope he'll fight for 'em; but, after all, it takes about three generations before one of these new hands gets regularly recognised by the rest.”

“What haughty pride!” exclaimed she, but nothing in her tone implied reprobation.

“Ain't it haughty pride?” cried he; “but if you only knew how it is nurtured in them, how they are worshipped! They walk down St. James's-street, and the policeman elbows me out of the way to make room for them; they stroll into Tattersall's, and the very horses cock their tails and step higher as they trot past; they go into church, and the parson clears his throat and speaks up in a fine round voice for them. It's only because the blessed sun is not an English institution, or he'd keep all his warmth and light for the peerage!”

“And have they, who render all this homage, no shame for their self-abasement?”

“Shame! why the very approach to them is an honour. When a lord in the ring at Newmarket nods his head to me and says, ‘How dy'e do, Davis?’ my pals—my acquaintances, I mean—are twice as respectful to me for the rest of the day. Not that I care for that,” added he, sternly; “I know *them* a deuced sight better than they fancy!—far better than *they* know *me*!”

Lizzie fell into a reverie; her thoughts went back to a conversation she had once held with Beecher about the habits of the great world, and all the difficulties to its approach.

“I wish I could dare to put a question to you, Papa,” said she, at last.

“Do so, girl. I'll do my best to answer it.”

“And not be angry at my presumption—not be offended with me?”

“Not a bit. Be frank with me, and you'll find me just as candid.”

"What I would ask, then, is this—and mind, Papa, it is in no mere curiosity, no idle indulgence of a passing whim I would ask it, but for sake of self-guidance and direction—who are we?—what are we?"

The blood rose to Davis's face and temples till he became crimson, his nostrils dilated, and his eyes flashed with a wild lustre. Had the bitterest insult of an enemy been hurled at his face before the open world, his countenance could not have betrayed an expression of more intense passion.

"By Heaven!" said he, with a long-drawn breath, "I didn't think there was one in Europe would have asked me that much to my face. There's no denying it, girl, you have my own pluck in you."

"If I ever thought it would have moved you so——"

"Only to make me love you the more, girl—to make me know you for my own child in heart and soul," cried he, pressing her warmly to him.

"But I would not have cost you this emotion, dearest Pa——"

"It's over now; I am as cool as yourself. There's my hand there's not much show of nervousness there. 'Who are we?'" exclaimed he, fiercely, echoing her question. "I'd like to know how many of that eight-and-twenty millions they say we are in England could answer such a question? There's a short thick book or two tells about the Peerage and Baronetage, and says who are they, but as for the rest of us——" A wave of the hand finished the sentence. "My own answer would be that of many another: I'm the son of a man who bore the same name, and who, if alive, would tell the same story. As to what we are, that's another question," added he, shrewdly; "though, to be sure, English life and habits have established a very easy way of treating the matter. Everybody with no visible means of support, and who does nothing for his own subsistence, is either a gentleman or a vagrant. If he be positively and utterly unable to do anything for himself, he's a gentleman; if he can do a stroke of work in some line or other, he's only a vagrant."

"And you, Papa?" asked she, with an accent as calm and unconcerned as might be.

"I?—I am a little of both, perhaps," said he, after a pause.

A silence ensued long enough to be painful to each; Lizzy did not dare to repeat her question, although it still remained unanswered, and Davis knew well that he had not met it frankly as he promised. What a severe struggle was that his mind

now endured. The hoarded secret of his whole life—the great mystery to which he had sacrificed all the happiness of a home—for which he had consented to estrange himself from his child—training her up amidst associations and habits every one of which increased the distance between them—there it was now on his lip, a word might reveal it, and by its utterance might be blasted all the fondest hopes his heart had ever cherished. To make Lizzy a lady, to surround her not only with all the wants and requirements of station, but to imbue her mind with sentiments and modes of thought such as befit that condition, had been the devoted labour of his life. For this he had toiled and struggled, contrived, plotted, and schemed for years long. What terrible scenes had he not encountered, with what desperate characters not associated. In the fearful commerce of the play-table there was not a dark passion of the human heart he had not explored—to know men in their worst aspects—in their insolence of triumph, the meanness of their defeat, in their moments of avarice, in their waste—to read their natures so that every start or sigh, a motion of the finger, a quivering of the lip, should have its significance—to perceive as by an instinct wherein the craft or subtlety of each lay, and by the same rapid intuition, to know his weak point also! Men have won high collegiate honours with less intensity of study than he gave to this dark pursuit; men have come out of battle with less peril to life than he faced every day of his existence, and all for one object—all that his daughter might breathe an atmosphere from which he must live excluded, and know a world whose threshold he should never pass. Such was the terrible conflict that now raged within him, as he reviewed the past, and saw to what a narrow issue he had reduced his one chance of happiness. “There she stands now,” thought he, “all that my fondest hopes had ever fashioned her, and who is to say what one word, one single word uttered by my lips, may not make of that noble nature, pure and spotless as it is? How will she bear to hear that her station is a deception? her whole life a lie? that she is the daughter of Grog Davis—the Leg?” Heaven knows with what dexterous artifices he had often met this difficulty as it used to present itself to his mind—how he had seen in what way he could extricate himself—how reconcile his own short-comings with her high-soaring tastes and habits! Whatever such devices he had ever conceived, none came to his aid now, not one offered him the slightest assistance.

Then came another thought—“How long is this deception to

be carried on? Am I to wait?" said he, "and if so, for what? Ay, there's the question, for what? Is it that some other may break the news to her, and tell her whose daughter she is?" In that world he knew best he could well imagine with what especial malice such a tale would be revealed. Not that slander need call imagination to its aid. Alas! his life had incidents enough for malignity to gloat over!

His stout arm shook, and his strong frame trembled with a sort of convulsive shudder as these thoughts flashed across his mind.

"Are you cold, dearest Pa? Are you ill?" asked she, eagerly.

"No. Why do you ask?" said he, sternly.

"You trembled all over; I was afraid you were not well."

"I'm never ill," said he, in the same tone. "There's a bullet in me somewhere about the hip—they can't make out exactly where—gives me a twinge of pain now and then. Except that, I never knew what ailment means."

"In what battle?"

"It wasn't a battle," broke he in—"it was a duel. It's an old story now, and not worth remembering. There, you need not shudder, girl; the fellow who shot me is alive, though, I must say, he hasn't a very graceful way of walking. Do you ever read the newspapers—did they allow you ever to read them at school?"

"No; but occasionally I used to catch a glance at them in the drawing-room. It was a kind of reading fascinated me intensely, it was so real. But why do you ask me?"

"I don't know why I asked the question," muttered he, half moodily, and hung his head down. "Yes I do," cried he, after a pause. "I wanted to know if you ever saw *my* name—our name—in the public prints."

"Once—only once, and very long ago, I did, and I asked the governess if the name were common in England, and she said, 'Yes.' I remember the paragraph that attracted me to this very hour. It was the case of a young man—I forget the name—who shot himself in despair after some losses at play, and the narrative was headed: 'More of Grog Davis!'"

Davis started back, and, in a voice thick and hoarse with passion, cried out,

"And then? What next?" The words were uttered in a voice so fearfully wild that Lizzy stood in a sort of stupified terror, and unable to reply. "Don't you hear me, girl?" cried he. "I asked you what came next."

"There was an account of an inquest—some investigation as to how the poor fellow had met his death. I remember little about that. I was only curious to learn who this Grog Davis might be——"

"And they couldn't tell you, it seems!"

"No; they had never heard of him."

"Then I'll tell you, girl. Here he stands before you."

"You! Papa—you! dearest Pa. Oh no, no!" cried she, imploringly, as she threw herself on his neck and sobbed bitterly—"oh no! I'll not believe it."

"And why not believe it? What was there in that same story that should prejudice *me*? There, there, girl, if you give way thus it will offend me—ay, Lizzy, offend me."

She raised her head from his shoulder, dried her eyes, and stood calm and unmoved before him. Her pale face, paler in the bright moonlight, now showed not a trace of passion or emotion.

Davis would have given his right hand at that moment that she had been led into some burst of excitement—some outbreak of passionate feeling—which in rebuking might have carried him away from all thoughts about himself; but she was cold, and still, and silent, like one who has heard some terrible tidings, but yet has summoned up courage for the trial. There was that in her calm, impassive stare that cut him to the very heart; nor could any words have reproached him so bitterly as that steadfast look.

"If you don't know who we are, you know what we are, girl. Is that not so?" cried he, in a thick and passionate tone. "I meant to have told it you fifty times. There wasn't a week in the last two years that I didn't at least begin a letter to you about it. I did more: I cut all the things out of the newspapers and made a collection of them, and intended, some day or other, you should read them. Indeed, it was only because you seemed so happy there that I spared you. I felt the day must come, though. Know it you must, sooner or later, and better from me than another. I mean better for the other, for, by Heaven! I'd have shot him who told you. Why don't you speak to me, girl? What's passing in your mind?"

"I scarcely know," said she, in a hollow voice. "I don't quite feel sure I am awake!"

"Yes!" cried he, with a terrible oath, "you *are* awake; it was the past was the dream!—when you were the Princess, and every post brought you some fresh means of extravagance—that was the dream! The world went well with myself in those days.

Luck stood to me in whatever I touched. In all I ventured, I was sure to come right, as if I had made my bargain with Fortune. But the jade threw me over at last, that she did. From the hour I went in against Hope's stables at Rickworth—that's two years and eleven days to-day—I never won a bet! The greenest youngsters from Oxford beat me at my own weapons. I went on selling—now a farm, now a house, now a brood mare. I sent the money all to you, girl, every guinea of it. What I did myself, I did on tick till the September settling at Cottiswoode, and then it was all up. I was ruined!"

"Ruined!" echoed she, while she grasped his arm and drew him closer to her side; "you surely had made friends——"

"Friends are capital things when the world goes well with you, but friends are fond of a good cook and iced champagne, and they don't fancy broken boots and a bad hat. Besides, what credit is to the merchant, luck is to one of us. Let the word get abroad luck is against you—let them begin to say, 'There's that poor devil Davis in for it again; he's so unlucky!'—once they say that, you are shunned like a fellow with the plague—none will associate with you, none give you a helping hand or a word of counsel. Why the grooms wouldn't gallop if I was on the ground, for fear my bad luck might strain a sinew and slip a ligament! And they were right, too! Smile if you like, girl—I am not a very superstitious fellow—but nobody shall persuade me there ain't such a thing as luck. Be that as it may, *mine* turned—I was ruined!"

"And were there none to come to your aid? You must surely have lent a helping hand to many——"

"Look here, girl," said he; "now that we are on this subject, you may as well understand it aright. If a gentleman born—a fellow like Beecher, there—comes to grief, there's always plenty of others ready to serve him; some for the sake of his family, some for his name, some because there's always the chance that he may pay one day or other. Snobs, too, would help him, because he's the Honourable Annesley Beecher; but it's vastly different when it's Grog Davis is in case. Every one rejoices when a Leg breaks down."

"A Leg is the slang for—for——"

"For a betting man," interposed Davis. "When a fellow takes up the Turf as a profession, they call him 'a Leg'—not that they'd exactly say it to his face!" added he, with a smile of intense sarcasm.

"Go on," said she, faintly, after a slight pause.

"Go on with what?" cried he, rudely. "I've told you everything. You wanted to know what I was, and how I made my living. Well, you know it all now. To be sure, the newspapers, if you read them, could give you more precise details; but, there's one thing, girl, they couldn't blink: there's not one of them could say that what my head planned overnight my hand was not ready to defend in the morning! I can't always throw a main, but I'll hit my man—and at five-and-thirty paces, if he don't like to stand closer."

"And what led you to this life, Papa? Was it choice?"

"I have told you enough already—too much, mayhap," said he, doggedly. "Question me no more!"

Had Davis but seen the face of her at his side, what a terrible shock it would have given him, hard and stern as he was. She was pale as marble—even the lips were colourless—while along her cheeks a heavy tear stole slowly along. It was the only one she shed, but it cost an agony.

"And this is the awaking from that glorious dream I have long been lost in?—this the explanation of that life of costly extravagance, where every wish was answered—every taste pampered. This is the reverse of that medal which represented me as noble by birth and high in station!" If these were the first bitter thoughts that crossed her mind, her next were to ask herself why it was that the tidings had not humiliated her more deeply. "How is it that while I see and hear all this," cried she, "I listen in a spirit of defiance, not defeat? Is it that in my heart I dare to arraign the decrees the world has adopted for its guidance? Do I presume to believe that I can play the rebel successfully against the haughtiest aristocracy of Europe?—There is yet one question, Papa," said she, slowly and deliberately, "that I would wish to ask you. It is the last I will ever put, leaving to your own discretion to answer it or not. Why was it—I mean, with what object did you place me where by habit and education I should contract ideas of life so widely different from those I was born to?"

"Can't you guess?" said he, rudely.

"Mayhap I do guess the reason," said she, in a low but unbroken voice. "I remember your saying one night to Mr. Beecher, 'when a colt has a turn of speed he's always worth the training.'"

Davis grew crimson; his very ears tingled as the blood mounted to his head. Was it shame? was it anger? was it a strange pride to see the traits of his own heart thus reflected on

his child? or was it a blending of all three together? At all events, he never uttered a word, but walked slowly along at her side.

A low faint sigh from Lizzy suddenly aroused him, and he said, "Are you ill—are you tired, girl?"

"I'd like to go back to the house," said she, calmly, but weakly. He turned without a word, and they walked on towards the inn.

"When I proposed this walk, Lizzy, I never meant it to have been so sad a one."

"Nor yours the fault if it is so," said she, drearily.

"I could, it is true, have kept you longer in the dark. I might have maintained this deception a week or two longer."

"Oh, that were useless; the mistake was in not——No matter—it was never a question wherein I could have a voice. Hasn't the night grown colder?"

"No; it's just what it was when we came out," said he, gruffly. "Now that you know all this affair," resumed he, after a lapse of some minutes, "there's another matter I'd like to talk over; it touches yourself too, and we may as well have it now as later. What about Beecher; he has been paying you attentions hasn't he?"

"None beyond what I may reasonably expect from one in his position towards me."

"Yes but he has, though. I sent over Lienstahl to report to me, and he says that Beecher's manner implied attachment, and yours showed no repugnance to him. Is this true?"

"It may be, for aught I know," said she, indifferently. "Mr. Beecher probably knows what *he* meant. I certainly can answer for myself, and will say, that whatever my manner might imply, my heart—if that be the name for it—gave no concurrence to what the Count attributed to me."

"Do you dislike him?"

"Dislike? No; certainly not; he is too gentle, too obliging, too conciliating in manner, too well bred to create dislike. He is not very brilliant——"

"He'll be a Peer," broke in Davis.

"I suspect that all his views of life are deeply tinged with prejudice?"

"He'll be a Peer," continued Davis.

"He has been utterly neglected in education."

"He don't want it."

"I mean that, to suit the station he fills——"

"He has got the station—he's sure of it—he can't be stripped of it. In one word, girl, he has, by right and birth, rank and fortune, such as ten generations of men like myself, labouring hard every hour of their lives, could never win. He'll be a Peer of England, and I know of no title means so much."

"But of all his failings," said Lizzy, who seemed to take little heed of her father's interruptions, while steadily following out her own thoughts—"of all his failings, he has none greater or more pernicious than the belief that it is a mark of intelligence to outwit one's neighbour—that cunning is a high quality, and craft means genius."

"These might be poor qualities to gain a living with," said Davis, "but I tell you, once for all, he doesn't need to be brilliant, or witty, or any other nonsense of that kind. He'll have the right to go where all the cleverness of the world couldn't place him, to live in a set, where, if he could write plays like Shakspeare, build bridges like Brunel, or train a horse like John Scott, it wouldn't avail him a brass farthing; and if you only knew, child, what these people think of each other, and what the world thinks of *them*, you'd see it's the best stake ever was run for."

Lizzy never replied a word; every syllable of her father's speech was, 'as it were, "filtering down" into her mind, and she brooded long over the thoughts thus suggested. Thus walking along in silence, side by side, they drew nigh the house. They had now gained the little garden before the door, and were standing in the broad full moonlight face to face. Davis saw that her eyes were red and her cheeks marked by tears, but an impassive calm, and a demeanour subdued even to coldness, seemed to have succeeded to this emotion. "Oh! my poor girl," broke he out in a voice of deepest feeling, "if I didn't know the world so well—if I didn't know how little one gains by indulging affection—if I didn't know, besides, how you yourself will think of all this some ten or twelve years hence, I couldn't have the heart for it."

"And—must—it—be?" faltered she out, in a broken accent.

Davis threw his arm around her, and, pressing her to him, sobbed bitterly. "There, there," cried he, "go in—go in, child; go to bed, and get some sleep." And with this he turned quickly away and left her.

CHAPTER LXXIII.

A RIDE TO NEUWEID.

LONG before Lizzy had composed herself to sleep—for her heart was torn by a first sorrow, and she lay restless and fevered—her father, mounted on a post-horse, was riding away towards the Rhine. He had desired that the reply to his telegraphic message should be addressed to him at the post-office of Neuweid, and thither he was now bent.

It is a strange thing, that when the affections of men of this stamp are deeply moved—when their sensibilities, long dulled and hardened by the rubs of life, are once evoked—the feelings excited are less those of gentleness and tenderness than an almost savage desire for some personal conflict. Urging his horse to full speed, Davis spared neither whip nor spur. Alone upon that solitary road, he asked himself aloud if he were less alone in the broad, bleak world? “Is not the ‘field’ against me wherever I go? I never heard of the fellow that had not some ‘moorings’—some anchorage—except myself.” But a brief hour ago and there was one who loved him with all her heart—who saw, or fancied she saw, a rich mine of generous qualities in his rough manners and blunt address—who pictured to her mind what such a nature might have been under happier circumstances and with better culture; “And now,” cried he, aloud—“now she knows me for what I am, how will she bear this? Will she sink under it? will it crush her? or has she enough of my own blood in her veins to meet it courageously? Oh! if she only knew the world as I do—what a mean coward it is—how it bullies the weak and truckles to the strong—how it frowns down the timid and simper to the sturdy! Every man—ay, and every woman—can sell his life dearly; and

strange it is, one only learns the value of this secret too late. Let a fellow start with it, and see what it does for him. I went at them single-handed; I went down all alone into the ring, and have they beaten *me*? I had no honourable or right honourable friends to pick *me* out of a scrape. It would be hard to find three men, with good hats on them, would bail me to the amount of ten pounds; and here I am to-day just as ready to face them all as ever."

What canting nonsense do we occasionally read in certain quarters to disparage mere personal courage—"mere personal courage!" We are reminded that the ignoble quality is held in common with the bull-dog, and that in this essential he is our master; we are reminded that it is a low and vulgar attribute that neither elevates nor enlightens, that the meanest creatures are often gifted with it, and the noblest natures void of it. To all this we give a loud and firm denial; and we affirm as steadfastly, that without it there is neither truth nor manliness. The self-reliance that makes a man maintain his word, be faithful to his friendships, and honourable in his dealings, has no root in a heart that shakes with craven fear. The life of a coward is the voyage of a ship with a leak—eternal contrivance, never-ceasing emergency. All thoughts dashed with a perpetual fear of death, what room is there for one generous emotion, one great or high-hearted ambition?

What a quality must that be, I would ask, that gives even to such a nature as this man's a sort of rugged dignity? Yes, with all his failings and short-comings, and I am not going to hide one of them, his personal courage lifted him out of that category of contempt to which his life assigned him. How well the world understands such men to be the *feræ naturæ* of humanity. It may shun, deprecate, disparage, but it never despises them. If then of such value be a gift that makes even the bad appear tolerable, there is this evil in the quality, that it disposes men like Davis to be ever on the attack. Their whole policy of life is aggressive.

It was about eight o'clock, on a mellow autumnal morning, as Grog reached Neuweid, and rode down the main street, already becoming thronged with the peasantry for the market. Guiding his horse carefully through the booths of flaunting wares, gay stalls of rural finery, and stands of fruit, he reached the little inn where he meant to breakfast.

The post was not to open for an hour, so that he ordered his meal to be at once got ready, and looked also to the comfort of

his beast, somewhat blown by a long stage. His breakfast had been laid in the public room, in which two travellers were seated, whose appearance, even before he heard them speak, proclaimed them to be English. They were both young, fresh-looking, and well favoured, that stamp of half-modesty, half-boldness, so essentially British, was on them, and, notwithstanding the entrance of a stranger, they talked away in their native language with all the fearless security your genuine John Bull feels that no confounded foreigner can understand him. It is but fair to admit that Grog's beard and moustaches, his frogged and braided grass-green coat, and his blue spectacles, made him resemble anything on earth rather than a subject of Queen Victoria.

In the mere glance Grog bestowed upon them as he passed he saw the class to which they pertained—young Oxford or Cambridge men, “out” for their vacation—an order for which he ever entertained a supreme contempt. He despised their mock shrewdness, their assumed craft, and that affectation of being “fast men,” which in reality never soared above running up a bill at the pastrycooks, thrashing a townsman, and giving a stunning wine party at their rooms. To what benefit could such miniature vices be turned? It was only “punting” with the Evil One, and Grog thought so, and avoided them.

Deep in the “mysterious gutturals” of the *Cologne Gazette*, or busily discussing his carbonadoed beefsteak, Davis gave no heed to the bald, disjointed chat of his neighbours; broken phrases reached him at intervals about proctors and the “little go,” the stroke oar of Brazennose, or some new celebrity of the ballet, when suddenly the name of Annesley Beecher startled him. He now listened attentively, and heard one of them relating to the other, that while waiting for his arrival at Aix-la-Chapelle, he had devoted himself to watching Beecher and “the stunning girl” that was with him. It appeared from what he said that all Aix was wildly excited by curiosity on her account. That she was neither wife, sister, nor mistress, none disputed. Who was she, then? or what could be the explanation of that mysterious companionship? “You should have seen her at the rooms,” continued the narrator; “she used to make her appearance about eleven—rarely before—dressed with a magnificence that threw all the little German royalties into the shade—such lace and ornaments! They said, of course, it was all false; I can only tell you that old Lady Bamouth got beside her one night just to examine her scarf, and she pro-

claimed it real Brussels, and worth I can't say how much; and for the recovery of an opal that fell out of her bracelet one night Beecher gave six hundred francs next morning."

"Then it was the money was false," broke in the other; "Beecher is ruined, he hasn't sixpence—at least I've always heard him mentioned as a fellow regularly cleaned out years ago."

"He was before my day," resumed the first; "but I heard the same story you did. But what's the meaning of calling a fellow ruined that can go about the world stopping at first-rate hotels, having carriages, horses, opera-boxes; why the waiter at Aix told me that he paid above five hundred florins for flowers. This girl, whoever she was, was wild about moss-roses and pink hyacinths, and they fetched them from Rotterdam for her. Pretty well that, for a ruined man!"

"Perhaps it was she herself had the money," suggested the other, half carelessly.

"That's possible too; I know that whenever she came down to the wells and took a glass of the waters, she always gave a gold piece to the girl that served her.

"Then she was not a lady by birth; that trait is quite sufficient to decide the point."

Davis started as if he had been stung; here, from the lips of these raw youths, was he to receive a lesson in life, and he told that all the cost and splendour by which he purposed to smooth over the difficult approaches to society were fatal blunders and no more. That the very extravagance so imposing in one or acknowledged station, becomes "suspect" in those of dubious rank. Like all men of quick resentments, he soon turned the blame from himself to others. It was Lizzy's fault. What right had she to draw upon herself all the censorious tongues or a watering-place? Why should she have attracted this foolish notoriety? After all, she was new to life and the world, and might be pardoned, but Beecher—it was just the one solitary thing he *did* know—Beecher ought to have warned her against this peril; he ought to have guarded against it himself. Why should such a girl be exposed to the insolent comments of fellows like these? and he measured them deliberately, and thought over in his mind how little trouble it would cost him to put two families into mourning—mayhap, to throw a life-long misery into some happy home, and change the whole destinies of many he had never seen—never should see! There was, however, this difficulty, that in doing so he drew a greater

publicity upon her—all whose interests required secrecy and caution. "Till she have the right to another name than mine she must not be the talk of newspapers," said he to himself; and, like many a prudent reflection, it had its sting of pain.

These meditations were rudely cut short by the sound of his own name. It was the elder of the two young men who was discussing the duel at Brussels, and detailing, with all the influence of his superior experience, the various reasons why "no man was called upon to meet such a fellow as Davis." "I talked it over with Stanworth and Ellis, and they both agreed with me."

"But what is to be done?" asked the younger.

"You hand him over to the police, or you thrash him right well with a horsewhip, pay five pounds' penalty for the assault, and there's an end on't."

"And is 'Grog,' as they call him, the man to put up with that mode of treatment?"

"What can he do? Notoriety must ruin him. The moment it gets abroad that a wolf has been seen near a village, all turn out for the pursuit."

Had he who uttered this sentiment only cast his eyes towards the stranger at the table in the corner, he would have seen by the expression of the features, that his simile was not a bad one. Davis shook with passion, and his self-control, to sit still and listen, was almost like a fit.

"All the more ungenerous, then, would be the conduct," said the younger, "to resent a personal wrong by calling in others to your aid."

"Don't you see, George," broke in the other, "that men have their beasts of prey like other animals, and agree to hunt them down, out of common security, for the mischief he causes, and the misery he spreads through the world. One of these fellows in his lair is worse than any tiger that ever crouched in a jungle. And as to dealing with him, as Ellis says, do you ever talk of giving a tiger fair play? do you make a duel of it, with equal weapons? or do you just shoot him down when you can, and how you can?"

Davis arose, and drew himself up, and there was a moment of irresolution in his mind, of which, could the two travellers have read the secret, they would almost as soon have smoked their cigars in the den of a wild beast. And yet there they sat, puffing indolently away the blue cloud, scarcely deigning a passing glance at Grog, as he proceeded to leave the room.

Anatomists assure us that if we but knew the delicate tissues by which the machinery of our life is carried on, how slight the fibres, how complex the functions on which vitality depends, we should not have courage to move, or even speak, lest we should destroy an organisation so delicate and sensitive. In like manner, did we but know in life the perils over which we daily pass, the charged mines over which we walk, the volcanoes that are actually throbbing beneath our feet, what terrors would it give to mere existence! It was on the turn of a straw how Davis decided—a word the more—a look from one of them—a laugh—might have cost a life. With a long-drawn breath, the sigh of a pent-up emotion, Grog found himself in the open air; there was a vague feeling in his mind of having escaped a peril, but what, or where, or how, he couldn't remember.

He sat down in the little porch under the clustering vines; the picturesque street, with its carved gables and tasteful balconies, sloped gently down to the Rhine, which ran in swift eddies beneath. It was a fair and pleasant scene, nor was its influence all lost upon him. He was already calmed. The gay dresses and cheerful faces of the peasants, as they passed and repassed, their merry voices, their hearty recognitions and pleasant greetings, gave a happier channel to his thoughts. He thought of Lizzy—how *she* would like it—how enjoy it! and then a sudden pang shot through his heart, and he remembered that she, too, was no longer the same. The illusion that had made her life a fairy tale was gone—dissipated for ever. The spell that gave the charm to her existence was broken! What was all the cultivation of mind—what the fascinations by which she moved the hearts of all around her—what the accomplishments by which she adorned society, if they only marked the width of that chasm that separated her from the well-born and the wealthy? To be more than their equal in grace, beauty, and genius, less than their inferior in station, was a sad lesson to learn, and this the last night had taught her.

"Ay," muttered he, below his breath, "she knows who she is now, but she has yet to learn all that others think of her." How bitterly, at that instant, did he reproach himself for having revealed his secret. A thousand times better to have relinquished all ambition, and preserved the warm and confiding love she bore him. "We might have gone to America—to Australia. In some far away country I could easily earn

subsistence, and no trace of my former life follow me. She, at least, would not have been lost to me—her affection would have clung to me through every trial. Mere reverse of fortune—for such and no more had it seemed—would never have chilled the generous glow of her woman's heart, and I need not have shocked her self-love, nor insulted her dignity, by telling her that she was the Gambler's daughter."

As he was thus musing, the two travellers came out and seated themselves in the porch; the elder one needing a light for his cigar touched his hat to Davis, and muttered some broken words of German, to request permission to light it from him. Grog bowed a stiff acquiescence, and the younger said, "Not over courteous—a red Jew, I take it!"

"A travelling jeweller, I fancy," said the other; "twig the smart watch-chain."

Oh, young gentlemen, how gingerly had you trod there if you only knew how thin was the ice under your feet, and how cold the depth beneath it. Davis arose and walked down the street. The mellow notes of a bugle announced the arrival of the post, and the office must now open in few minutes. Forcing his way through the throng to the open window, he asked if there were any letters for Captain Christopher? None. Any for Captain Davis? None. Any for the Hon. Annesley Beecher? The same reply. He was turning away in disappointment, when a voice called out, "Wait! here's a message just come in from the Telegraph-office. Please to sign the receipt for it." He wrote the name, C. Christopher, boldly, and pushed his way through the crowd once more.

If his heart throbbed painfully with the intensity of anxiety, his fingers never trembled as he broke the seal of the despatch. Three brief lines were all that were there; but three brief lines can carry the tidings of a whole destiny. We give it as it stood:

"William Peach to Christopher, Neuweid, in Nassau.

"The Viscount died yesterday, at four P.M. Lawyers want A. B.'s address immediately.

"Proceedings already begun."

Davis devoured the lines four—five times over, and then muttered between his teeth, "Safe enough now—the match as good as over!"

"I say, George," said one of the young travellers to his

companion, "our friend in the green frock must have got news of a prize in the lottery. Did you ever see anything like his eyes? they actually lit up the blue spectacles."

"Clap the saddle on that black horse," cried Grog, as he passed into the stable; "give him a glass of Kirschwasser, and bring him round to the door."

"He knows how to treat an old poster," said the ostler; "it's not the first ride he has taken on a courier's saddle."

CHAPTER LXXIV.

HOW GROG DAVIS DISCOURSED, AND ANNESLEY BEECHER LISTENED.

WHEN Davis reached the little inn at evening, he was surprised to learn that Annesley Beecher had passed the day alone. Lizzy complained of headache, and kept her room. Grog listened to this with a grave, almost stern, look; he partly guessed that the ailment was a mere pretext; he knew better to what to attribute her absence. They dined tête-à-tête; but there was a constraint over each, and there was little of that festive enjoyment that graced the table on the day before. Beecher was revolving in his mind all the confessions that burdened his conscience about Stein and the mystical volume he had bought from him; the large sums he had drawn for were also grievous loads upon his heart, and he knew not in what temper or spirit Davis would hear of them. Grog, too, had many things in his head; not, indeed, that he meant to reveal them, but they were like secret instructions to his own heart, to be referred to for guidance and direction.

They sipped their wine under the trellised vines, and smoked their cigars in an atmosphere fragrant with the jessamine and the rose, the crystal river eddying along at their feet, and the purple mountain glowing in the last tints of declining day.

"We want Lizzy to enliven us," said Davis, after a long silence on both sides. "We're dull and heavy without her."

"By Jove! it does make a precious difference whether she's here or not," said Beecher, earnestly.

"There's a light-heartedness about that girl does one good," said Davis, as he puffed his cigar. "And she's no fool, either."

"I should think she's not," muttered Beecher, half indignantly.

"It couldn't be supposed she should know life like you or me, for instance; she hasn't seen the thing—never mixed with it; but let the time come that she shall take her part in the comedy, you'll see whether she'll not act it cleverly."

"She has head for anything!" chimed in Beecher.

"Ay, and what they call tact, too. I don't care what company you place her in; take her among your Duchesses to-morrow, and see if she'll not keep her own place—and that a good one."

Beecher sighed, but it was not in any despondency.

And now a long silence ensued; not a sound heard save the light noise of the bottle as it passed between them, and the long-drawn puffs of smoke that issued from their lips.

"What did you do with Stein? Did he give you the money?" asked Davis, at last.

"Oh yes, he gave it—he gave it freely enough; in fact, he bled so easily, that, as the doctors say, I took a good dash from him. You mentioned two thousand florins, but I thought, as I was about it, a little more would do us no harm, and so I said, 'Lazarus, old fellow, what if we make this for ten thousand——'"

"Ten thousand!" said Davis, removing his cigar from his lips and staring earnestly, but yet not angrily, at the other.

"Don't you see, that as I have the money with me, began Beecher, in a tone of apology and terror, "and as the old fellow didn't put 'the screw on' as to discount——"

"No, he's fair enough about that; indeed, so far as my own experience goes, all Jews are. It's your high-class Christian I'm afraid of; but you took the cash?"

"Yes!" said Beecher, timidly, for he wasn't sure he was yet out of danger.

"It was well done—well thought of," said Grog, blandly. "We'll want a good round sum to try this new martingale of mine. Opening with five Naps, we must be able to bear a run of four hundred and eighty, which, according to the rule of chances, might occur once in seventeen thousand three hundred and forty times."

"Oh! as to that," broke in Beecher, "I have hedged famously. I bought old Stein's conjuring book, what he calls his 'Kleinod, showing how every game is to be played, when to lay on, when to draw off. Here it is," said he, producing the volume from his breast-pocket. "I have been over it all day. I tried three

problems with the cards myself, but I couldn't make them come up right."

"How did you get him to part with this?" asked Davis, as he examined the volume carefully.

"Well, I gave him a fancy price—that is, I am to give it, which makes all the difference," said Beecher, laughing. "In short, I gave him a bit of stiff, at three months, for one thousand——"

"Florins?"

"No, pounds—pounds sterling," said Beecher, with a half-choking effort.

"It *was* a fancy price," said Grog, slowly, not the slightest sign of displeasure manifesting itself on his face as he spoke.

"You don't think, then, that it was too much?" faltered out Beecher.

"Perhaps not, *under* the circumstances," said Davis, keenly.

"What do you mean by 'under the circumstances?'"

Davis threw his cigar into the stream, pushed bottle and glasses away from him—far enough to permit him to rest both his arms on the table—and then steadfastly fixing his eyes on the other, with a look of intense but not angry significance, said, "How often have I told you, Beecher, that it was no use to try a 'double' with me. Why, man, I know every card in your hand."

"I give you my sacred word of honour, Grog——"

"To be renewed at three months, I suppose?" said Davis, sneeringly. "No, no, my boy, it takes an earlier riser to get to the blind side of Kit Davis. I'm not angry with you for trying it—not a bit, lad; there's nothing wrong in it but the waste of time."

"May I be hanged, drawn, and quartered, if I know what you are at, Grog!" exclaimed the other, piteously.

"Well, all I can say is *I read you easier than you read me*. You gave old Lazarus a thousand pounds for that book after reading that paragraph in the *Times*."

"What paragraph?"

"I mean that about your brother's title not being legal."

"I never saw it—never heard of it," cried Beecher, in undisguised terror.

"Well, I suppose I'm to believe you," said Davis, half eluctantly. "It was in a letter from the Crimea, stating, that ~~so~~ confident are the friends of a certain claimant to the title and estates now enjoyed by Lord Lackington, that they have

offered the young soldier who represents the claim any amount of money he pleases to purchase promotion in the service."

"I repeat to you my word of honour I never saw nor heard of it."

"Of course, then, I believe you," said Grog.

Again and again did Beecher reiterate assurances of his good faith; he declared, that during all his stay at Aix, he had never looked into a newspaper, nor had he received one single letter, except from Davis himself; and Davis believed him, from the simple fact that such a paragraph as he quoted had no existence—never was in print—never uttered, till Grog's own lips had fashioned it.

"But surely, Grog, it is not a flying rumour—the invention of some penny-a-liner—would find any credence with *you*?"

"I don't know," said Davis, slowly; "I won't say I'd swear to it all, but just as little would I reject it as a fable. At all events, I gave you credit for having trimmed your sails by the tidings, and if you didn't, why there's no harm done, only you're not so shrewd a fellow as I thought you."

Beecher's face grew scarlet; how near—how very near he was of being "gazetted" the sharp fellow he had been striving for years to become, and now, by his own stupid admission, had he invalidated his claim to that high degree.

"And this is old Stein's celebrated book? I've heard of it these five-and-thirty years, though I never saw it till now. Well, I won't say you made a bad bargain——"

"Indeed, Grog—indeed, by George! I'm as glad as it I won five hundred to hear you say so. To tell you the truth, I was half afraid to own myself the purchaser. I said to myself, 'Davis will chaff me so about this book, he'll call me all the blockheads in Europe——'"

"No, no, Beecher, you ain't a blockhead, nor will I suffer any one to call you such. There are things—there are people, too, just as there are games—that you don't know, but before long you'll be the match of any fellow going. I can put you up to them, and I will. There's my hand on it."

Beecher grasped the proffered hand and squeezed it with a warmth there was no denying. What wonderful change had come over Grog he could not guess. Whence this marvellous alteration in his manner towards him? No longer scoffing at his mistaken notions of people, or disparaging his abilities, Davis condescended now to talk and take counsel with him as an equal.

"That's the king of wines," said Davis, as he pushed a fresh bottle across the table. "When you can get 'Marcobrunner' like that, where's the Burgundy ever equalled it? Fill up your glass, and drink a bumper to our next venture, whatever it be!"

"Our next venture, whatever it be!" echoed Beecher, as he laid the empty glass on the table.

"Another toast," said Davis, replenishing the glasses. "'May all of our successes be in company.'"

"I drink it with all my heart, old fellow. You've always stood like a man to me, and I'll never desert you," cried Beecher, whose head was never proof against the united force of wine and excitement.

"There never were two fellows on this earth so made to run in double harness," said Davis, "as you and myself. Let us only lay our heads together, and there's nothing can resist us."

Grog now launched forth into one of those descriptions which he could throw off with a master's hand, sketching life as a great hunting-ground, and themselves as the hunters. What zest and vigour could he impart to such a picture!—how artfully, too, could he make Beecher the foreground figure, he himself only shadowed forth as an accessory. Listening with eagerness to all he said, Beecher continued to drink deeply, the starry night, the perfumed air, the rippling sounds of the river, all combining with the wine and the converse to make up a dream-land of fascination. Nor was the enchantment less perfect that the objects described passed before him like a series of dissolving views. They represented, all of them, a life of pleasure and enjoyment—means inexhaustible—means for every extravagance—and, what he relished fully as much, the undisputed recognition by the world to the claim of being a "sharp fellow"—a character to which Grog's aid was so dexterously contributed as to escape all detection.

Perhaps our reader might not have patience with us were we to follow Davis through all the devious turns and windings of this tortuous discourse. Perhaps, too, we should fail signally were we to attempt to convey in our cold narrative what came from his lips with all the marvellous power of a good story-teller, whose voice could command many an inflection, and whose crafty nature appreciated the temper of the metal beneath his beat. If we could master all these, another and a greater difficulty would still remain; for how could we convey, as Davis contrived to do, that through all these gorgeous scenes of worldly success, in the splendour of a life of magnificence, amidst triumphs and con-

quests, one figure should ever pass before the mind's eye, now participating in the success, now urging its completion, now, as it were, shedding a calm and chastened light over all—a kind of angelic influence that heightened every enjoyment of the good, and averted every approach of evil?

Do not fancy, I beseech you, that this was a stroke of high art far above the pencil of Grog Davis. Amongst the accidents of his early life the "stage" had figured; and Grog had displayed very considerable talents for the career. It was only at the call of what he considered a higher ambition he had given up "the boards" for "the ring." Besides this, he was inspired by the Marcobrunner, which had in an equal degree affected the brain of him who listened. If Grog were eloquent, Beecher was ductile. Indeed, so eagerly did he devour all that the other said, that when a moment of pause occurred, he called out, "Go on, old fellow—go on! I could listen to you for ever!"

Nor was it altogether surprising that he should like to hear words of praise and commendation from lips that once only opened in sarcasm and ridicule of him. How pleasant to know at last that he was really and truly a great partner in the house of Davis and Co., and not a mere commission agent, and that this partnership—how that idea came to strike him we cannot determine—was to be binding for ever. How exalting, too, the sentiment that it was just at the moment when all his future looked gloomiest this friendship was ratified. The Lackington Peerage might go, but there was Grog Davis staunch and true—the ancient estates be torn from his house, but there was the precious volume of old Lazarus, with wealth untold within its pages. Thus threading his way through these tortuous passages of thought, stumbling, falling, and blundering at every step, that poor brain lost all power of coherency and all guidance, and he wavered between a reckless defiance of the world and a sort of slavish fear of its censure.

"And Lackington, Grog—Lackington," cried he, at length—"he's as proud as Lucifer—what will he say?"

"Not so much as you think!" remarked Grog, dryly. "Lackington will take it easier than you suspect."

"No, no, you don't know him—don't know him at all. I wouldn't stand face to face with him this minute for a round sum!"

"I'd not like it over much myself!" muttered Davis, with a grim smile.

"It's all from pride of birth and blood, and he'd say, 'Debts,

if you like, go ahead with Jews and the fifty per centers, but, hang it, don't tie a stone round your throat—don't put a double ditch between you and your own rank! Look where I am,' he'd say—"look where I am!"

"Well, I hope he finds it comfortable!" muttered Grog, with a dry malice.

"'Look where I am!'" resumed Beecher, trying to imitate the pretentious tones of his brother's voice. "And where is it, after all?"

"Where we'll all be, one day or other?" growled out Grog, who could not help answering his own reflections.

"'And are you sure of where you are?'—that's what I'd ask him, eh, Grog?—'are you sure of where you are?'"

"That *would* be a poser, I suspect," said Davis, who laughed heartily; and the contagion catching Beecher, he laughed till the tears came.

"I might ask him, besides, 'Are you quite sure how long you are to remain where you are?' eh, Grog? What would he say to that?"

"The chances are, he'd not answer at all," said Davis, dryly.

"No, no! you mistake him, he's always ready with a reason; and then he sets out by reminding you that he's the head of the house—a fact that a younger brother doesn't need to have recalled to his memory. Oh, Grog, old fellow, if I were the Viscount—not that I wish any ill to Lackington—not that I'd really enjoy the thing at any cost to *him*—but if I were——"

"Well, let's hear. What then?" cried Davis, as he filled the other's glass to the top—"what then?"

"Wouldn't I trot the coach along at a very different pace! It's not poking about Italy, dining with smoke-dried Cardinals and snuffy old 'Marchesas,' I'd be; but I'd have such a stable, old fellow, with Jem Bates to ride and Tom Ward to train them, and yourself, too, to counsel me. Wouldn't we give Binsleigh, and Hawksworth, and the rest of them a cold bath, eh?"

"That ain't the style of thing at all, Beecher," said Grog, deprecatingly; "you ought to go in for the 'grand British Nobleman dodge'—county interests—influence with a party—and a vote in the Lords. If you were to try it, you'd make a right good speech. It wouldn't be one of those flowery things the Irish fellows do, but a manly, straightforward, genuine English discourse."

"Do you really think so, Grog?" asked he, eagerly.

"I'm sure of it. I never mistook pace in my life; and I know what's in you as well as if I saw it. The real fact is, you have a turn of speed that you yourself have no notion of, but it will come out one of these days if you're attacked—if they say anything about your life on the turf, your former companions, or a word about the betting-ring."

The charm of this flattery was far more intoxicating than even the copious goblets of "Marcobrunner," and Beecher's flushed cheeks and flashing eyes betrayed how it overpowered him. Davis went on.

"You are one of those fellows that never show 'the stuff they're made of' till some injustice is done them—eh?"

"True as a book!" chimed in Beecher.

"Take you fairly, and a child might lead you, but try it on to deny you what you justly have a right to—let them attempt to dictate to you, and say, 'Do this, and don't do the other'—little they know on what back they've put the saddle! You'll give them such a hoist in the air as they never expected!"

"How you read every line of me!" exclaimed Beecher, in ecstasy.

"And I'll tell you more; there's not another man breathing knows you but myself. They've always seen you in petty scrapes and little difficulties, pulling the devil by the last joint of his tail, as Jack Bush says; but let them wait till you come out for a cup race—the Two Thousand Guinea Stakes—then I'm not Kit Davis if you won't be one of the first men in England."

"I hope you're right, Davis. I almost feel as if you were," said Beecher, earnestly.

"When did you find me in the wrong, so far as judgment went? Show me one single mistake I ever made in a matter of opinion? Who was it foretold that Bramston would bolt after the Cotteswold if Rugby didn't win? who told the whole yard at Tattersall's that Grimsby would sell Holt's stable? who saw that Rickman Turner was a coward, and wouldn't fight?—and I said it, the very day they gave him 'the Bath' for his services in China! I don't know much about books, nor do I pretend to, but as to men and women—men best—I'll back myself against all England and the Channel Islands."

"And I'll take as much as you'll spare me out of your book, Grog," said Beecher, enthusiastically, while he filled his glass and drained it.

"You see," said Davis, in a low, confidential tone, as if imparting a great secret, "I've always remarked that the way

they smash a fellow in Parliament—I don't care in which House—is always by raking up something or other he did years before. If he wrote a play, or a novel, or a book of poems, they're down on him at once about his imagination and his fancy—that means, he never told a word of truth in his life. If he was unfortunate in business, they're sure to refer to him about some change in the Law of Bankruptcy, and say, 'There's my honourable friend yonder ought to be able to help us by his experiences!' Then, if a fellow has only his wits about him, how he floors them! You see there's a great deal of capital to be made out of one of these attacks. You rise to reply, without any anger or passion—only dignity—nothing but dignity! You appeal to the House if the assault of the right honourable Baronet opposite was strictly in good taste—whatever that means. You ask why you are signalised out to be the mark of his eloquence, or his wit, or whatever it be; and then you come out with a fine account of yourself, and all the honourable motives that nobody ever suspected you of. That's the moment to praise everything you ever did, or meant to do, or couldn't do—that's the time to show them what a man they have amongst them."

"Capital—glorious—excellent!" cried Beecher, in delight.

"Well, suppose now," said Davis, "there's a bill about marriages—they're always changing the law about them; it's evidently a contract doesn't work quite smoothly for all parties—well, there's sure to be many a spicy remark and impertinent allusion in the debate; it's a sore subject, and every one has a 'raw' on it, and at last somebody says something about unequal matches, alliances with an inferior class, 'noble Lords that have not scrupled to mingle the ancient blood of their race with the—the thin and washy current that flows in plebeian veins.' I'm the Lord Chancellor, now," said Grog, boldly, "and I immediately turn round and fix my eyes upon *you*. Up you get at once, and say, 'I accept, my Lords—I accept for myself, and my own case, every word the noble Duke, or Marquis, has just uttered. It never would have occurred to me to make my personal history the subject of your Lordships' attention, but when thus rudely brought before you—rudely and gratuitously introduced——' Here you'd frown at the last speaker, as much as to say, 'You'll hear more about this outside——'"

"Go on—go on!" cried Beecher, with impatience.

"'I rise in this place'—that has always a great impression, to say 'this place'—'I rise in this place to say that I am

prouder in the choice that shares with me the honours of my coronet, than in all the dignity and privilege that same coronet confers.' What a cheer—what a regular hurrah follows that, for they have seen her—ay, that have they! They have beheld her sweeping down the gilded drawing-room—the handsomest woman in England! Where's the Duchess with her eyes, her skin, her dignity, and her grace? Doesn't she look 'thoroughbred in every vein of her neck?' Where did she get that graceful sweep, that easy-swimming gait, if she hadn't it in her very nature?"

"By Heaven, it's true, every syllable of it!" cried out Beecher, in all the wild ecstasy of delight.

"Where is the man—I don't care what his rank might be—who wouldn't envy you after you'd made that speech? You'd walk down Westminster the proudest man in England after it."

Beecher's features glowed with a delight that showed he had already anticipated the sense of his popularity.

"And then how the newspapers will praise you. It will be as if you built a bridge over the gulf that separates two distinct classes of people. You'll be a sort of Noble reformer. What was the wisest thing Louis Napoleon ever did? His marriage. Do you mark that he was always following his uncle's footsteps in all his other policy; he saw that the only great mistake he ever made was looking out for a high match, and, like a shrewd fellow, he said, 'I have station, rank, power, and money enough for two. It's not to win the good favour of a wrinkled old Archduchess, or a deaf old Princess, I'm going to marry. I'll go in for the whole field. I'll take the girl that, if I wasn't an Emperor, I'd be proud to call my own.' And signs on't, they all cried out, 'See if he hasn't his heart in the right place—there's an honest drop there!' Let him be as ambitious as you like, he married just as you or I would. Ain't it a fine thing," exclaimed Grog, enthusiastically, "when one has all the middle classes in one's favour—the respectable ruck that's always running but seldom showing a winner? Get these fellows with you, and it's like Baring's name on the back of your bill. And now, Beecher," said Davis, grasping the other's hand, and speaking with a deep earnestness—"and now that I've said what you might have done, I'll tell you what I *will* do. I have just been sketching out this line of country to see how you'd take your fences, nothing more. You've shown me that you're the right sort, and I'm not the man to forget it. If I had seen the shadow of a shade of a dodge about you—if I'd have detected

one line in your face, or one shake in your voice, like treachery—so help me! I'd have thrown you over like winking! You fancied yourself a great man, and were staunch and true to your old friends; now it's my turn to tell you that I wouldn't give that empty flask yonder for all your brother Lackington's lease of his Peerage! Hear me out. I have it from his own lawyers—from the fellows in Furnival's Inn—it's up with him; the others are perfectly sure of their verdict. There's how it is! And now, Annesley Beecher, you were willing to marry Kit Davis's daughter when you thought you could make her a Peeress—now, I say, that when you've nothing, nor haven't a sixpence to bless yourself with, it's Kit himself will give her to you, and say, there's not the other man breathing he'd as soon see the husband of this same Lizzy Davis!”

The burst of emotion with which Beecher met this speech was, indeed, the result of very conflicting feelings: shock at the terrible tidings of his brother's downfall, and the insult to his house and name, mingled with a burst of gratitude to Davis for his fidelity; but stronger and deeper than these was another sentiment, for smile if you will, most sceptical reader, the man was in love, after *his* fashion. I do not ask of you to believe that he felt as you or I might or ought to feel the tender passion. I do not seek to persuade you that the object of his affection mingled with all his thoughts, swayed them, and etherealised them, that she was the theme of many a heart-woven story, the heroine of many an ecstatic dream; still she was one who could elicit from that nature, in all its selfishness, little traits of generous feeling, little bursts of honest sentiment, that made him appear better to his own heart. And so far has the adage truth with it, virtue is its own reward, in the conscious sense of well doing, in the peaceful calm of an unrepining spirit, and, not least of all, in that sympathy which good men so readily bestow upon even faint efforts to win their suffrage.

And so he sobbed out something that meant grief and gratitude; hope, fear, and uncertainty—worse than fear—all agitating and distracting him by turns.

Very little time did Grog give himself for calmer reflection; away he went at full speed to sketch out their future life. They were to make the tour of Europe, winning all before them. All the joyous part, all the splendour of equipage, retinue, mode of life, and outlay being dictated by Beecher, all the more business detail, the play and the money-getting, devolving upon Davis,

Baden, Ems, Wiesbaden, Hamburg, and Aix, all glowed in the descriptions like fields of foretold glory. How they were to outshine Princes in magnificence and Royal Highnesses in display—the envy of Beecher—of his unvarying luck—the splendour of all his belongings—Lizzy's beauty too! What a page would he fill in the great gossip calendar of Europe!

Well Davis knew how to feed the craving vanity of that weak nature, whose most ardent desire was to be deemed cunning and sharp, the cautious reserve of prudent men in his company being a tribute to his acuteness the dearest his heart could covet. Oh, if he longed for anything as success, it was for a time when his coming would spread a degree of terror at a play-table, and men would rise rather than risk their fortune against *his*! Should such a moment ever be his? was that great triumph ever to befall him? And all this as the husband of Lizzy Davis!

"Ay!" said Grog, as he read and traced each succeeding emotion in that transparent nature—"ay! that's what may be called life; and when we've done Europe, smashed every bank on the Continent, we'll cross the Atlantic, and give Jonathan a 'touch of our quality.' I know all their games well, and I've had my 'three bullets and a poker' before now on a Mississippi steamer! Your Yankee likes faro, and I've a new cabal to teach him; in short, my boy, there's a roving commission of fun before us, and if it don't pay, *my* name ain't Davis!"

"Was this your scheme, then, Grog," asked Beecher, "when you told me at Brussels that you could make a man of me?"

"It was, my boy," cried Davis, eagerly. "You've guessed it. There was only one obstacle to the success of the plan at that time, and this exists no longer."

"What was the obstacle you speak of?"

"Simply, that so long as you fancied yourself next in succession to a Peerage, you'd never lay yourself down regularly to your work; you'd say, 'Lackington can't live for ever; he's almost twenty years my senior. I must be the Viscount yet. Why should I, therefore, cumber myself with cares that I have no need of, and involve myself amongst people I'll have to cut one of these days. No. I'll just make a waiting race of it, and be patient.' Now, however, that you can't count upon this prospect—now that to-morrow, or next day, will declare to the world that Henry Hastings Beecher is just Henry Hastings Beecher, and not Viscount Lackington, and that the Honourable Annesley is just Annesley, and no more—now, I say, that you

see this clearly with your own eyes, you'll buckle to, and do your work manfully. And there was another thing——" And here Davis paused, and seemed to meditate.

"What was that, Grog? Be candid, old fellow, and tell me all."

"So I will, then," resumed Davis. "That other thing was this. So long as you were the great man in prospective, and might some fine day be a Lord, you could always persuade yourself—or some one else could persuade you—that Kit Davis was hanging on you just for your rank—that he wanted the intimacy of a man in your station, and so on. Now, if you ever came to believe this, there would have been an end of all confidence between us; and without confidence, what can a fellow do for his pal? This was, therefore, the obstacle, and even if you could have got over it, *I* couldn't. No, hang me if I could! I was always saying to myself, 'It's all very nice and smooth now, Kit, between you and Beecher—you eat, drink, and sleep together—but wait till he turns the corner, old fellow, and see if he won't give you the cold shoulder.'"

"You couldn't believe——"

"Yes but I could, and did, too; and many's the time I said to myself, 'If Beecher wasn't a top-sawyer, what a trump he'd be! He has head for anything, and address for anything.' And do you know"—here Grog dropped his voice to a whisper, and spoke as if under great emotion—"and do you know that I couldn't be the same man to you myself just because of your rank. That was the reason I used to be so sulky, so suspicious, and so—ay, actually cruel with you, telling you, as I did, what couldn't I do with certain acceptances? Now, look here, Beecher——Light that taper beside you; there's a match in that box at your elbow."

Unsteady enough was Beecher's hand; indeed, it was not wine alone now made him tremble. An intense agitation shook his frame, and he shivered like one in an ague fit. He couldn't tell what was coming; the theme alone was enough to arrest all process of reasoning on his part. It was like the force of a blow that stunned and stupified at once.

"There, that will do," said Grog, as he drew a long pocket-book from his breast-pocket, and searched for some time amongst its contents. "Ay, here they are—two—three—four of them—insignificant-looking scraps of paper they look—and yet there's a terrible exposure in open court, a dreary sea voyage over the ocean, and a whole life of a felon's suffering in those few lines,"

"For the love of mercy, Davis, if you have a spark of pity in your heart—if you have a heart at all—don't speak in this way to me!" cried Beecher, in a voice almost choked with sobs.

"It is for the last time in my life you'll ever hear such words," said Grog, calmly. "Read them over carefully—examine them well. Yes, I wish and require it."

"Oh, I know them well!" said Beecher, with a heavy sigh. "Many's the sleepless night the thought of them has cost me."

"Go over every line of them—satisfy yourself that they're the same—that the words 'Johnstone Howard' are in your own hand."

Beecher bent over the papers; but, with his dimmed eyes and trembling fingers, it was some time ere he could decipher them. A sigh from the very bottom of his heart, was all the reply he could make.

"They'll never cost you another sleepless night, old fellow!" said Davis, as he held them over the flame of the taper. "There's the end of 'em now!"

CHAPTER LXXV.

REFLECTIONS OF ANNESLEY BEECHER.

A WISER head than that of Annesley Beecher might have felt some confusion on awaking the morning after the events we have just related. Indeed, his first sensations were those of actual bewilderment as he opened his eyes, and beheld the pine-clad mountains rising in endless succession—the deep glens—the gushing streams, crossed by rude bridges of a single tree—the rustic saw-mills all dripping with spray, and trembling with the force of their own machinery. Where was he? What strange land was this? How came he there? Was this in reality the “new world beyond the seas” Davis had so often described to him? By a slow, laborious process, like filtering, stray memories dropped one by one through his clouded faculties, and at length he remembered the scene of the preceding night, and all that had passed between Davis and himself. Yet, withal, there was much of doubt and uncertainty mixed up, nor could he, by any effort, satisfy himself how much was fact, how much mere speculation. Was it true that Lackington was to lose his peerage? Was it possible such a dreadful blow was to fall on their house? If so, what portion of the estates would follow the title? Would a great part—would all the property be transferred to the new claimant? What length of time, too, might the suit occupy?—such things often lasted for years upon years. Was it too late for a compromise? Could not some arrangement be come to “some way?” Grog was surely the man to decree a plan for this—at all events, he could protract and spin out proceedings. “It’s not P.P.—the match

may never come off," muttered Beecher, "and I'll back old Grog to 'square it,' *somehow*."

And then the bills—the forged acceptances—they were actually burned before his face! It was well-nigh incredible—but he had seen them, held them in his own hand, and watched them as the night wind wafted away their blackened embers, never more to rise in judgment against him—never to cost him another night of sleepless terror! Who would have believed Davis capable of such magnanimity? Of all men living, he had deemed him the last to forego any hold over another—and then the act was his own spontaneous doing, without reservation, without condition.

Beecher's heart swelled proudly as he thought over this trait of his friend. Was it that he felt a sense of joy in believing better of mankind?—was it that it awoke within his breast more hopeful thoughts of his fellow-men?—did it appeal to him like a voice, saying, "Despair of no man; there are touches of kindness in natures the very roughest, that redeem whole lives of harshness?" No, my good reader, it would be unfair and unjust to you were I to say that such sentiments as these swayed him. Annesley Beecher's thoughts flowed in another and very different channel. The words he whispered to his heart were somewhat in this wise: "What a wonderful fellow must you be, Beecher, to acquire such influence over a man like Davis; what marvellous gifts must you not be endowed with! Is it any wonder that Grog predicts a brilliant future to him who can curb to his will the most stubborn of natures, and elicit traits of sacrifice out of the most selfish of men? Who but yourself could work this miracle?" Mean and ignoble as such a mode of arguing may seem, take my word for it, most patient reader, it is not unfrequent in this world of ours, nor is Annesley Beecher the only one who has ascribed all his good fortune to his own deservings.

"Shrewd fellow, that Davis; he always saw what stuff was in *me*; he recognised the real metal, while others were only sneering at the dross; just as he knows this moment, that if I start fresh without name, fortune, or title, that I'm sure to be at the top o' the tree at last. Give me his daughter! I should think he would! It's not all up with Lackington yet, dark as it looks; we're in possession, and there is a 'good line of country' between the Honourable Annesley Beecher, next Viscount in succession, and Kit Davis, commonly called Grog of that ilk! Not that the girl isn't equal to any station—

there's no denying *that*! Call her a Greville, a Stanley, or a Seymour, and she's a match for the finest man in England! Make her a Countess to-morrow, and she'll look it!"

It is but fair to acknowledge that Beecher was not bewildered without some due cause, for if Davis had, at one time, spoken to him as one who no longer possessed claim to rank and station, but was a mere adventurer like himself, at another moment, he had addressed him as the future Viscount, and pictured him as hurling a proud defiance to the world in the choice he had made of his wife. This was no blunder on Grog's part. That acute individual had, in the course of his legal experiences, remarked that learned counsel are wont to insert pleas which are occasionally even contradictory, alleging at times that "there was no debt," and then, that "if there had been, it was already paid." In the same spirit did Davis embrace each contingency of Fortune, showing, that whether Peer or Commoner, Annesley Beecher "stood to win" in making Lizzy his wife. "Scratch the pedigree, and she'll be a stunning Peeress; and if the suit goes against us, show me the girl like her to meet the world!" This was the sum of the reflections that cost him a whole morning's intellectual labour, and more of actual mental fatigue than befalls a great parliamentary leader after a stormy debate.

That Davis had no intention to intimidate him was clearly shown by his destroying the acceptances: had he wished to lean on coercion, here was the means. Take your choice between matrimony and a felony was a short and easy piece of argumentation, such as would well have suited Grog's summary notions; and yet he had, of his own accord, freely and for ever relinquished this vantage ground. Beecher was now free. For the first time for many a long year of life he arose from his bed without a fear of the law and its emissaries. The horrible nightmare that had scared him so often, dashing the wildest moments of dissipation with sudden fear, deepening the depths of despondency with greater gloom, had all fled, and he awoke to feel that there was no terror in a "Beak's" eye, nothing to daunt him in the shrewd glances of a Detective. They who have lived years long of insecurity, tortured by the incessant sense of an impending peril, to befall them to-day, to-morrow, or next day, become at length so imbued with fear, that when the hour of their emancipation arrives, they are not able, for a considerable time, to assure themselves of their safety. The captive dreams of his chains through many a night after he has gained his liberty; the shipwrecked sailor can never forget

the raft and the lone ocean on which he tossed; nor was it altogether easy for Beecher to convince himself that he could walk the world with his head high, and bid defiance to Crown prosecutors and juries!

"I'm out of *your* debt, Master Grog," said he, with a pleasant laugh to himself; "catch me if you can running up another score in *your* books—wait till you see me slipping my neck into a noose held by *your* fingers. You made me feel the curb pretty sharp for many a long day, and might still, if you hadn't taken off the bridle with your own hands; but I'm free now, and won't I show you a fair pair of heels! Who could blame me, I'd like to know? When a fellow gets out of gaol, does he take lodgings next door to the prison? I never asked him to burn those bills. It was all his own doing. I conclude that a fellow, as shrewd as he, knew what he was about. Mayhap he said to himself, 'Beecher's the downiest cove going. It will be a deuced sight better to have him as my friend and pal than to send him to break stones in Australia. I can stand to win a good thing on him, and why should I send him over seas just out of spite? I'll come the grand magnanimous dodge over him—destroy the papers before his face, and say, "Now, old fellow, what do you say to that for a touch of generosity?"'"

"Well, I'll tell you what I say, Master Davis," said he, drawing himself up, and speaking boldly out. "I say that you're a regular trump, and no mistake; but you're not the sharp fellow I took you for. No, no, old gent, you're no match for A. B.! He's been running in bandages all this time past; but now that his back sinews are all right, you'll see if he hasn't a turn of speed in him.' And what is more, I'd say to him, 'Look here, Grog, we've jogged along these ten or twelve years or so without much profit to either of us—what say you if we dissolve the partnership and let each do a little business on his own account? If I should turn out anything very brilliant, you'll be proud of me, just as England says she is when a young colony takes a great spring of success, and say, "Ay, he was one of my rearing!"' Of course all dictation, all that bullying intolerance is at an end now, and time it was! Wasn't I well weary of it! wasn't I actually sick of life with it! I couldn't turn to anything, couldn't think of anything, with that eternal fear before me, always asking myself, 'Is he going to do it now?' It is very hard to believe it's all over." And he heaved a deep sigh as though disburdening his heart of its last load of sorrow.

"Davis is very wide awake," continued he; "he'll soon see how to trim his sails to this new wind; he'll know that he can't bully—can't terrorise."

A sharp, quick report of a pistol, with a clanging crash, and then a faint tinkle of a bell, cut short his musings, and Beecher hastened to the window and looked out. It was Davis in the vine alley practising with the pistol; he had just sent a ball through the target, the bell giving warning that the shot had pierced the very centre. Beecher watched him as he levelled again; he thought he saw a faint tremor of the hand, a slight unsteadiness of the wrist; vain illusion—bang went the weapon, and again the little bell gave forth the token of success.

"Give me the word—one—two," cried out Davis to the man who loaded and handed him the pistols. "One—two," called out the other, and the same instant rang out the bell, and the ball was true to its mark.

"What a shot—what a *deadly* shot!" muttered Beecher, as a cold shudder came over him.

As quickly as he could take the weapons, Davis now fired; four—five—six balls went in succession through the tiny circle, the bell tinkling on and never ceasing, so rapidly did shot follow upon shot, till, as if sated with success, he turned away, saying, "I'll try it to-morrow, blindfold!"

"I'm certain," muttered Beecher, "no man is bound to go out with a fellow like that. A duel is meant to be a hazard, not a dead certainty! To stand before him at twenty—ay, forty paces, is a suicide, neither more nor less; he must kill you. I'd insist on his fighting across a handkerchief. I'd say, 'Let us stand foot to foot!'" No, Beecher, not a bit of it; you'd say nothing of the kind, nor, if you did, would it avail you! Your craven heart could not beat were those stern gray eyes fixed upon you, looking death into you from a yard off. He'd shoot you down as pitilessly, too, at one distance as at the other.

Was it in the fulness of a conviction that his faltering lips tried to deny, that he threw himself back upon a chair, while a cold, clammy sweat covered his face and forehead, a sickness like death crept over him, objects grew dim to his eyes, and the room seemed to turn and swim before him? Where was his high daring now? Where the boastful spirit in which he had declared himself free, no more the slave of Grog's insolent domination, nor basely cowering before his frown? Oh, the ineffable bitterness of that thought, coming, too, in revulsion to all his late self-gratulations! Where was the glorious emanci-

pation he had dreamed of, now? He could not throw him into prison, it is true, but he could lay him in a grave.

"But I'd not meet him," whispered he to himself. "One is not bound to meet a man of this sort."

There is something marvellously accommodating and elastic in the phrase, "One is not bound" to do this, that, and t'other. As the said bond is a contract between oneself and an imaginary world, its provisions are rarely onerous or exacting. Life is full of things "one is not bound to do." You are "not bound," for instance, to pay your father's debts, though, it might be, they were contracted in your behalf and for your benefit. You are not bound to marry the girl whose affections have been your own for years if you can do better in another quarter, and she has nothing in your handwriting to establish a contract. You are not bound—good swimmer though you be—to rescue a man from drowning, lest he should clutch too eagerly and peril your safety. You are not bound to risk the chance of a typhus by visiting a poor friend on his sick-bed. You are not bound to aid charities you but half approve—to assist people who have been improvident—to associate with many who are uninteresting to you. But why go on with this expurgatorial catalogue? It is quite clear the only things "one is bound" to do are those the world will enforce at his hands; and let our selfishness be ever so inveterate, and ever so crafty, the majority will beat us, and the Ayes have it at last!

Now, few men had a longer list of the things they were "not bound to do" than Annesley Beecher; in reality, if the balance were to be struck between them and those he acknowledged to be obligatory, it would have been like Falstaff's sack to the miserable morsel of bread. Men of his stamp fancy themselves very wise in their generation. They are not easy-natured, open, trustful, and free-handed, like that Pharisee! Take my word for it, the system **works not** so well as it looks, and they pass their existence in a narrow prison-ward of their own selfish instincts—their fears their fetters, their cowardly natures heavy as any chains!

Beecher reasoned somewhat in this wise. Grog was "not bound" to destroy the acceptances. He might have held them in terrorism over him for a life-long, and used them, at last, if occasion served. At all events, they were valuable securities, which it was pure and wanton waste to burn. Still, the act being done, Beecher was "bound" in the heaviest recognisances to his own heart to profit by the motion; and the great question

with him was, what was the best and shortest road to that desirable object? Supposing Lackington all right—no disputed claim to the title, no litigation of the estate—Beecher's best course had possibly been to slip his cable, make all sail, and part company with Davis for ever. One grave difficulty, however, opposed itself to this scheme. How was it possible for any man walking the earth to get out of reach of Grog Davis? Had there been a planet allotted for the especial use of Peers—were there some bright star above to which they could betake themselves and demand admission by showing their patent, and from which all of inferior birth were excluded, Beecher would assuredly have availed himself of his privilege; but, alas! whatever inequalities pervade life, there is but one earth to bear us living, and cover us when dead! Now, the portion of that earth which constitutes the continent of Europe, Davis knew like a Detective. A more hopeless undertaking could not be imagined than to try to escape him. Great as was his craft, it was nothing to his courage—a courage that gave him a sort of affinity to a wild animal, so headlong, reckless, and desperate did it seem. Provoke him, he was ever ready for the conflict; outrage him, and only your life's blood could be the expiation. And what an outrage had it been if Beecher had taken this moment—the first, perhaps the only one in all his life, in which Davis had accomplished a noble and generous action—to desert him! How he could picture to his mind Grog, when the tidings were told him!—not overwhelmed by astonishment—not stunned by surprise—not irresolute even for a second, but starting up like a wounded tiger, and eager for pursuit, his fierce eyeballs glaring, and his sinewy hands closed with a convulsive grip.

It was clear, therefore, that escape was impossible. What, then, was the alternative that remained? To abide—sign a life-long partnership with Grog, and marry Lizzy. "A stiff line of country—a very stiff line of country, Annesley, my boy," said he, addressing himself: "many a dangerous rasper, many a smashing fence there—have you nerve for it?" Now Beecher knew life well enough to see that such an existence was, in reality, little else than a steeple-chase, and he questioned himself gravely whether he possessed head or hand for the effort. Grog, to be sure, was a marvellous trainer, and Lizzy—what might not Lizzy achieve of success, with her beauty, her gracefulness, and her genius! It was not till after a long course of reflection that her image came up before him; but when once it did come, it was master of the scene. How he recalled all her winning

ways, her syren voice, her ready wit, her easy, graceful motion, her playful manner, that gave to her beauty so many new phases of attraction! What a fascination was it that in her company he never remembered a sorrow—nay, to think of her was the best solace he had ever found against the pain of gloomy reveries. She was never out of humour, never out of spirits—always brilliant, sparkling, and happy-minded. What a glorious thing to obtain a share of such a nature—the very next best thing to having it oneself, “But all this was not Love,” breaks in my impatient reader. Very true; I admit it in all humility. It was not what you, nor perhaps I, would call by that name; but yet it was all that Annesley Beecher had to offer in that regard.

Have you never remarked the strange and curious efforts made by men who have long lived on narrow fortunes to acquit themselves respectably on succeeding to larger means? They know well enough that they need not pinch, and screw and squeeze any longer—that Fortune has enlarged her boundaries, and that they can enter into wider, richer and pleasanter pasturage—and yet, for the life of them, they cannot make the venture! or if they do, it is with a sort of convulsive, spasmodic effort far more painful than pleasurable. Their old instincts press heavily upon them, and bear down all the promptings of their present prosperity; they really do not want all these bounties of Fate—they are half crushed by the shower of blessings. So is it precisely with your selfish man in his endeavours to expand into affection, and so was it with Beecher when he tried to be a lover.

Some moralists tell us that, even in the best natures, Love is essentially a selfish passion. What amount of egotism, then, does it not include in those who are far—very far—from being “the best?” With all this, let us be just to poor Beecher. Whatever there was of heart about him, she *had* touched; whatever of good, or kind, or gentle, in his neglected being existed, she had found the way to it. If he were capable of being anything better, she alone could have aided the reformation. If he were not to sink still lower and lower, it was to her helping hand his rescue would be owing. And somehow—though I cannot explain how—he felt and knew this to be the case. He could hear generous sentiments from *her*, and not deem them hypocrisy. He could listen to *her* words of trust and hopefulness, and yet not smile at her credulity. *She* had gained that amount of ascendancy over his mind which subjugated all his own prejudices to her influence, and, like all weak natures, he *was* never

so happy as in slavery. Last of all, what a prize it would be to be the husband of the most beautiful woman in Europe! There was a notoriety in that, far above the fame of winning "Derbys," or breaking Roulette Banks; and he pictured to himself how they would journey through the Continent, admired, worshipped, and envied, for already he had invested himself with the qualities of his future wife, and gloried in the triumphs she was so sure to win.

"By Jove! I'll do it," cried he, at last, as he slapped his hand on the table. "I don't care what they'll say, I *will* do it; and if there's any fellow dares to scoff or sneer at it, Grog shall shoot him. I'll make that bargain with him; and he'll like it, for he loves fighting." He summed up his resolution by imagining that the judgment of the world would run somehow in this fashion: "Wonderful fellow, that Annesley Beecher! It's not above a year since his brother lost the title, and there he is, now, married to the most splendid woman in Europe, living like a Prince—denying himself nothing, no matter what it cost—and all by his own wits! Show me his equal anywhere! Lackington used to call him a 'flat.' I wonder what he'd say, now!"

CHAPTER LXXVI.

A DARK CONFIDENCE.

WHAT a wound would it inflict upon our self-love were we occasionally to know that the concessions we have extorted from our own hearts by long effort and persuasion would be deemed matters of very doubtful acceptance by those in whose favour they were made. With what astonishment should we learn that there was nothing so very noble in our forgiveness—nothing so very splendid in our generosity! I have been led to this reflection by thinking over Annesley Beecher's late resolve, and wondering what effect it might have had on him could he have overheard what passed in the very chamber next his own.

Though Lizzy Davis was dressed and ready to come down to breakfast, she felt so ill and depressed that she lay down again on her bed, telling the maid to close the shutters and leave her to herself.

"What's this, Lizzy? What's the matter, girl?" said Davis, entering, and taking a seat at her bedside. "Your hand is on fire."

"I slept badly—scarcely at all," said she, faintly, "and my head feels as if it would split with pain."

"Poor child!" said he, as he kissed her burning forehead; "I was the cause of all this. Yes, Lizzy, I know it, but I had been staving off this hour for many and many a year. I felt in my heart that you were the only one in all the world who could console or cheer me, and yet I was satisfied to forego it all—to deny myself what I yearned after—just to spare you."

The words came with a slow and faltering utterance from him, and his lips quivered when he had done speaking.

"I'm not quite sure the plan was a good one," said she, in a low voice.

"Nor am I now," said he, sternly; "but I did it for the best." She heaved a heavy sigh, and was silent.

"Mayhap I thought, too," said he, after a pause, "that when you looked back at all the sacrifices I had made for you, how I toiled and laboured—not as other men toil and labour, for *my* handicraft was always exercised with a convict ship in the offing—There, you needn't shudder now; I'm here beside you safe. Well, I thought you'd say, 'After all, he gave me every advantage in his power. If he couldn't bestow on me station and riches, he made me equal to their enjoyment if they ever befel me. He didn't bring me down to his own level, nor to feel the heartburnings of his own daily life, but he made me, in thought and feeling, as good as any lady in the land.'"

"And for what—to what end?" said she, wildly.

"That you might be such, one day, girl," said he, passionately. "Do you think I have not known every hour, for the last thirty odd years, what I might have been, had I been trained, and schooled, and taught the things that others know? Have I not felt that I had pluck, daring, energy, and persistence that only wanted knowledge to beat them all, and leave them nowhere? Have I not said to myself, 'She has every one of these, and she has good looks to boot; and why shouldn't she go in and carry away the cup?' And do you think, when I said that, that I wasn't striking a docket of bankruptcy against my own heart for ever? for to make *you* great was to make *me* childless!"

Lizzy covered her face with her hands, but never uttered a word.

"I didn't need any one to tell me," resumed he, fiercely, "that training you up in luxury and refinement wasn't the way to make you satisfied with poverty, or proud of such a father as myself. I knew deuced well what I was preparing for myself there. 'But no matter,' I said, 'come what will, *she* shall have a fair start of it. Show me the fellow will try a balk—show me the man will cross the course while she's running.'"

Startled by the thick and guttural utterance of his words, Lizzy removed her hands from her face, and stared eagerly at him. Strongly shaken by passion as he was, every line and lineament tense with emotion, there was a marvellous resemblance between her beautiful features and the almost demoniac savagery of his. Had he not been at her side, the expression was only that of intense pain on a face of surpassing beauty, but, seen through the baneful interpretation of his look, she

seemed the type of a haughty nature spirited by the very wildest ambition.

"Ay, girl," said he, with a sigh, "you've cost me more than money or money's worth; and if I ever come to have what they call a 'conscience,' I'll have an ugly score to settle on your account."

"Oh, dearest father!" cried she, bitterly, "do not wring my heart by such words as these."

"There, you shall hear no more of it," said he, withdrawing his hand from her grasp and crossing his arm on his breast.

"Nay," said she, fondly, "you shall tell me all and everything. It has cost you heavily to make this confidence to me. Let us try if it cannot requite us both. I know the worst. No?" cried she, in terror, as he shook his head; "why, what is there remains behind?"

"How shall I tell you what remains behind?" broke he in, sternly; "how shall I teach you to know the world as I know it—to feel that every look bent on me is insult—every word uttered as I pass a sarcasm—that fellows rise from the table when I sit down at it? and though, now and then, I am lucky enough to catch one who goes too far, and make him a warning to others, they can do enough to spite me, and yet never come within twelve paces of me. I went over to Neuweid yesterday to fetch my letters from the post. You'd fancy that in a little village on this untravelled bank of the Rhine I might have rested an hour to bait my horse and eat my breakfast unmolested and without insult. You'd say that in a secluded spot like that I would be safe. Not a bit of it. Scandal has its hue and cry, and every man that walks the earth is its agent. Two young fellows fresh from England—by their dress, their manner, and their bad French, I judged them to be young students from Oxford or Cambridge—breakfasted in the same room with me, and deeming me a foreigner, and therefore—for it is a right English conclusion—unable to understand them, talked most freely of events and people before me. I paid little attention to their vapid talk till my ear caught the name of Beecher. They were discussing him and a lady who had been seen in his company at Aix-la-Chapelle. Yes, they had seen her repeatedly in her rides and drives, followed her to the Cursaal, and stared her at the Opera. They were quite enthusiastic about her beauty, and only puzzled to know who this mysterious creature might be that looked like a Queen and dressed like a Queen. One averred she was not Beecher's sister—the Peerage told

them that; as little was she his wife. Then came the other and last alternative. And I had to sit still and listen to every *pro* and *con* of this stupid converse—their miserable efforts to reason, or their still more contemptible attempts to jest, and dare not stand up before them and say, ‘Hold your slanderous tongues, for she is my daughter,’ because, to the first question they would put to me, I must say, ‘My name is Davis—Christopher Davis’—ay, ‘Grog Davis,’ if they would have it so. No, no, girl, all your beauty, all your grace, all your fascinations would not support such a name—the best horse that ever won the Derby will break down if you overweight him; and so, I had to leave my breakfast uneaten and come away how I could. For one brief moment I was irresolute. I felt that if I let them off so easily I’d pine and fret over it after, and, maybe, give way to passion some other time with less excuse; but my thoughts came back to you, Lizzy, and I said, ‘What signifies about me? I have no object, no goal in life, but her. She must not be talked of, nor made matter for newspaper gossip. She will one day or other hold a place at which slander and malevolence only talk in whispers, and even these must be uttered with secrecy!’ I couldn’t help laughing as I left the room. One of them declined to eat salad because it was unwholesome. Little he knew on what a tiny chance it depended whether that was to be his last breakfast. The devilish pleasure of turning back and telling him so almost overcame my resolution.”

“There was, then, an impropriety in my living at Aix as I did?” asked Lizzy, calmly.

“The impropriety, as you call it, need not have been notorious,” said he, in angry confusion. “If people will attract notice by an ostentatious display—horses, equipage, costly dressing, and so on, the world will talk of them. You couldn’t know this, but Beecher did. It was his unthinking folly drew these bad tongues on you. It is a score he’ll have to settle with me yet.”

“But, dearest papa, let me bear the blame that is my due. It was I—I myself—who encouraged, suggested these extravagances. I fancied myself possessed of boundless wealth; he never undeceived me; nay, he would not even answer my importunate questions as to my family, my connexions, whence we came, and of what county.”

“If he had,” muttered Grog, “I’d be curious to have heard his narrative.”

“I saw at last that there was a secret, and then I pressed him no more.”

"And you did well. Had you importuned, and had he yielded, it had been worse for *him*."

"Just as little did I suspect," continued she, rapidly, "that any reproach could attach to my living in his society; he was your friend; it was at your desire he accepted this brief guardianship; he never by a word, a look, transgressed the bounds of respectful courtesy; and I felt all the unconstrained freedom of old friendship in our intercourse."

"All his reserve and all your delicacy won't silence evil tongues, girl. I intended you to have stayed a day or two, at most, at Aix. You passed weeks there. Whose fault that, you say? Mine—of course mine, and no one else's. But what but my fault every step in your whole life? Why wasn't I satisfied to bring you up in my own station, with rogues and swindlers for daily associates? then I might have had a daughter who would not be ashamed to own me."

"Oh, that I am not; that I will never be," cried she, throwing her arm around his neck. "What has your whole life been but a sacrifice to me? It may be that you rate too highly these great prizes of life; that you attach to the station you covet for me a value I cannot concur in. Still, I feel that it was your love for me prompted this hope, and that while *you* trod the world darkly and painfully, you purchased a path of light and pleasantness for *me*."

"You have paid me for it all by these words," said he, drawing his hand across his eyes. "I'd work as a daily labourer on the road—I'd be a sailor before the mast—I'd take my turn with a chain-gang, and eat Norfolk Island biscuit, if it could help to place you where I seek to see you."

"And what is this rank to which you aspire so eagerly?"

"I want you to be a Peeress, girl. I want you to be one of the proudest guild the world ever yet saw or heard of; to have a station so accredited that every word you speak, every act you do, goes forth with its own authority."

"But stay," broke she in, "men's memories will surely carry them back to who I was."

"Let them, girl. Are you the stuff to be chilled by that? Have I made you what you are, that you cannot play their equal? There are not many of them better-looking—are there any cleverer or better informed? Even those Oxford boys said you looked like an Empress. If insult will crush you, girl, you've got little of *my* blood in you."

Lizzy's face flushed scarlet, and her eyes glittered wildly, as

they seemed to say, "Have no fears on that score." Then, suddenly changing to an ashy pallor, and in a voice trembling with intense feeling, she said: "But why seek out an existence of struggle and conflict? It is for me and my welfare that all your anxieties are exercised. Is it not possible that these can be promoted without the dangerous risk of this ambition? You know life well—tell me, then, are there not some paths a woman may tread for independence, and yet cause no blush to those who love her best? Of the acquirements you have bestowed upon me, are there not some which could be turned to this account? I could be a governess."

"Do you know what a governess is, girl?—a servant in the garb of a lady; one whose mind has been cultivated, not to form resources for herself, but to be drained and drawn on by others. They used to kill a serf, in the middle ages, that a noble might warm his feet in the hot entrails; our modern civilisation is satisfied by driving many a poor girl crazy, to cram some stupid numskull with a semblance of knowledge. You shall not be a governess."

"There is the stage, then," cried she. "I'm vain enough to imagine I should succeed there."

"I'll not hear of it," broke in Davis, passionately. "If I was certain you could act like Siddons herself, you should not walk the boards. I know what a theatre is. I know the life of coarse familiarity it leads to. The corps is a family gathered together like what jockeys call 'a scratch team'—a wheeler here, and a leader there, with just smartness enough to soar above the level of a dull audience, crammed with the light jest of low comedy, and steered by no higher ambition than a crowded benefit, or a junketing at Greenwich. How would you consort with these people?"

"Still, if I achieved success——"

"I won't have it—that's enough. I tell you, girl, that there is but one course for you. You must be declared winner at the stand-house before you have been seen on the ground. If you have to run the gauntlet through all the slanders and stories they will rake up of *me*—if, before you reach the goal, you have to fight all the lost battles of *my* live over again, you'll never see the winning-post."

"And is it not better to confront the storm, and risk one's chances with the elements, than suffer shipwreck at once? I tell you, father," cried she, eagerly, "I'll face all the perils you speak of, boldly; I'll brave insolence, neglect, sarcasm—what

they will—only let me feel one honest spot in my heart, and be able to say to myself, 'You have toiled lowly, and fared ill—you have dared a conflict and been worsted—but you have not made traffic of your affections, nor bought success by that which makes it valueless.'"

"These are the wild romances of a girl's fancy," said Davis. "Before a twelvemonth was over, you couldn't say, on your oath, whether you had married for love or interest, except that poverty might remind you of the one, and affluence suggest the other. Do you imagine that the years stop short with spring, and that one is always in the season of expectancy? No, no; months roll along, and after summer comes autumn, and then winter, and the light dress you fancied that you never need change would make but scanty clothing."

"But if I am not able to bring myself to this?"

"Are you certain you will be able to bring *me* to worse?" said he, solemnly. "Do you feel, Lizzy, as if you could repay my long life of sacrifice and struggle by what would undo them all? Do you feel strong enough to say, 'My old father was a fool to want to make *me* better than himself; I can descend to the set he is ashamed of; and, more still, I can summon courage to meet taunts and insults on him, which, had I station to repel them from, had never been uttered.'"

"Oh, do not tempt me this way," cried she, bitterly.

"But I will, girl—I will leave nothing unsaid that may induce you to save yourself from misery, and *me* from disgrace. I tell you, girl, if I face the world again, it must be with such security as only you can give me—you, a lady high in rank and position, can then save *me*. My enemies will know that their best game will not be to ruin me."

"And are you sure it would save you?" said she, sternly and coldly.

"I am," said he, in a voice like her own.

"Will you take a solemn oath to me that you see no other road out of these difficulties, whatever they are, than by my doing this?"

"I will swear it as solemnly as ever words were sworn. I believe—before Heaven I say it—that there's not another chance in life by which your future lot can be secured."

"Do not speak of mine; think solely of your fortunes, and say if this alone can save them."

"Just as firmly do I say, then, that once in the position I mean, you can rescue me out of every peril. You will be rich

enough to pay some, powerful enough to promote others, great enough to sway and influence all."

"Good God! what have you done, then, that it is only by sacrificing all my hopes of happiness that you can be ransomed?" cried she, with a burst of irrepressible passion.

"You want a confession, then," said Davis, in a tone of most savage energy; "you'd like to hear my own indictment of myself. Well, there are plenty of counts in it. 'Stand forward, Kit Davis. You are charged with various acts of swindling and cheating—light offences, all of them—committed in the best of company, and in concert with honourable and even noble colleagues. By the virtue of your oath, Captain Davis, how many horses have you poisoned? how many jockeys have you drugged? what number of men have you hocussed at play? what sums have you won from others in a state of utter insensibility? Can you state any case where you enforced a false demand by intimidation? Can you charge your memory with any instance of shooting a man who accused you of foul play? What names besides your own have you been in the habit of signing to bills? Have you any revelations to make about stock transferred under forgery? Will you kiss the book, and say, that nineteen out of twenty at the hulks have not done a fiftieth part of what you have done? Will you solemnly take oath that there are not ten, fifteen, twenty charges, which might be prosecuted against you, to transportation for life? and are there not two—or, certainly, is there not one—with a heavier forfeiture on it? Are there not descriptions of you in almost every Police bureau in Europe, and photographic likenesses, too, on frontier Passport-offices of little German States, that Hesse, and Cassel, and Coburgh should not be ravaged by the wolf called Grog Davis?"

"And if this be so, to what end do I sacrifice myself?" cried she, in bitter anguish. "Were it not better to seek out some far-away land where we cannot be traced? Let us go to America, to Australia—I don't care how remote it be—the country that will shelter us——"

"Not a step. I'll not budge out of Europe; win or lose, here I stay! Do as I tell you, girl, and the game is our own. It has been my safety this many a year that I could compromise so many in my own fall. Well, time has thinned the number marvellously. Many have died. The Cholera, the Crimea, the Marshalsea, broken hearts, and what not, have done their work; and of the few remaining, some have grown indifferent to ex-

posure, others have dropped out of view, and now it would be as much as I could do to place four or five men of good names in the dock beside me. That ain't enough. I must have connexions. I want those relations that can't afford disgrace. Let me only have *them*, they'll take care of their own reputations. You don't know, but *I* know, what great folk can do in England. There's not a line in the Ten Commandments they couldn't legalise with an Act of Parliament. They can marry and unmarry, bind and loosen, legitimise or illegitimise, by a vote 'of the House;' and by a vote of society they can do just as much: make a swindling railroad contractor the first man in London, and, if they liked it, and saw it suited their book, they could make Kit Davis a member of White's, or the Carlton, and once they did it, girl, they'd think twice before they'd try to undo it again. All I say is, give me a Viscount for a son-in-law, and see if I don't 'work the oracle.' Let me have just so much backing as secures a fair fight, and my head be on't if they don't give in before I do! They're very plucky with one another, girl, because they keep within the law; but mark how they tremble before the fellow that doesn't mind the law—that goes through it, at one side of it, or clean over it. That's the pull *I* have over them. The man that don't mind a wetting can always drag another into the water; do you see that?"

Davis had now so worked upon himself that he walked the room with hasty steps, his cheeks burning, and his eyes wildly, fiercely glaring. Amongst the traits which characterise men of lawless and depraved lives, none is more remarkable than the boastful hardihood with which they will at times deploy all the resources of their iniquity, even exaggerating the amount of the wrongs they have inflicted on society. There is something actually satanic in their exultation over a world they have cheated, bullied, injured, and insulted, so that in their infernal code, honesty and trustfulness seem only worthy of contempt, and he alone possessed of true courage who dares and defies the laws that bind his fellow-men.

Davis was not prone to impulsiveness; very few men were less the slaves of rash or intemperate humours. He had been reared in too stern a school to let mere temper master him; but his long practised self-restraint deserted him here. In his eagerness to carry his point, he was borne away beyond all his prudence, and once launched into the sea of his confessions, he wandered without chart or compass. Besides this, there was that strange, morbid sense of vanity which is experienced in

giving a shock to the fears and sensibilities of another. The deeper the tints of his own criminality—the more terrible the course he had run in life—so much the more was he to be feared and dreaded. If he should fail to work upon her affections, he might still hope to extract something from her terror, for who could say of what a man like him was not capable? And last of all, he had thrown off the mask, and he did not care to retain a single rag of the disguise he so long had worn, thus was it, then, that he stood before her in all the strong light of his iniquities—a criminal, whose forfeitures would have furnished Guilt for fifty.

“Shall I go on?” said he, in a voice of thick and laboured utterance, “or is this enough?”

“Oh, is it not enough?” cried she, bitterly.

“You asked me to tell you all—everything—and now that you’ve only caught a passing glimpse of what I could reveal, you start back affrighted. Be it so; there are at least no concealments between us now, and harsh as my lesson has been, it is not a whit harsher than if the world had given it. I’ve only one word more to say, girl,” said he, as he drew nigh the door and held his hand on the lock; “if it be your firm resolve to reject this fortune, the sooner you let me know it the better. I have said all that I need say; the rest is within your own hands; only remember, that if such be your determination, give me the earliest notice, for I, too, must take my measures for the future.”

If there was nothing of violence in the manner he uttered these words, there was a stern, impassive serenity that made them still more impressive, and Lizzy, without a word of reply, buried her face between her hands and wept.

Davis stood irresolute; for a moment it seemed as if his affection had triumphed, for he made a gesture as though he would approach her; then, suddenly correcting himself with a start, he muttered below his breath, “It is done now,” and left the room.

CHAPTER LXXVII.

SOME DAYS AT GLENGARIFF.

THE little Hermitage of Glengariff, with its wooded park, its winding river, its deep solitudes fragrant with wild-rose and honeysuckle, is familiar to my reader. He has lingered there with me, strolling through leafy glades, over smooth turf, catching glimpses of blue sea through the dark foliage, and feeling all the intense ecstasy of a spot that seemed especially created for peaceful enjoyment. What a charm was in those tangled pathways, overhung with jessamine and arbutus, or now flanked by moss-clad rock, through whose fissures small crystal rivulets trickled slowly down into little basins beneath. How loaded the air with delicious perfume—what a voluptuous sense of estrangement from all passing care crept over one as he stole noiselessly along over the smooth sward, and drank in the mellow blackbird's note, blended with the distant murmur of the rippling river. And where is it all now? The park is now traversed in every direction with wide, unfinished roads, great open spaces appear at intervals covered with building materials, yawning sand-quarries swarming with men, great brick-fields smoking in all the reeking oppression of that filthy manufacture, lime-kilns spreading their hateful breath on every side, vast cliffs of slate and granite-rock, making the air resound with their discordant crash, with all the vulgar tumult of a busy herd. If you turn seaward, the same ungraceful change is there: ugly and misshapen wharfs have replaced the picturesque huts of the fishermen; casks, and hogsheads, and bales, and hampers litter the little beach where once the festooned net was wont to hang, and groups of half-drunken sailors riot and dispute where once the merry laugh of sportive childhood was all that woke the echoes.

If the lover of the picturesque could weep tears of bitter sorrow over these changes, to the man of speculation and progress they were but signs of a glorious prosperity. The Grand Glengariff Villa Allotment and Marine Residence Company was a splendid scheme, whose shares were eagerly sought after at a high premium. Mr. Dunn must assuredly have lent all his energies to the enterprise, for descriptions of the spot were to be found throughout every corner of the three kingdoms. Coloured lithographs and stereoscopes depicted its most seductive scenes through the pages of popular "weeklies," and a dropping fire of interesting paragraphs continued to keep up the project before the public through the columns of the daily press. An *Illustrated News* of one week presented its subscribers with an extra engraving of the "Yachts entering Glengariff harbour after the regatta;" the next, it was a finished print of the "Lady Augusta Arden laying the foundation-stone of the Davenport Obelisk." At one moment the conflict between wild nature and ingenious art would be shown by a view of a clearing in Glengariff forest, where the solid foundations of some proud edifice were seen rising amidst prostrate pines and fallen oak-trees—prosaic announcements in advertising columns giving to these pictorial devices all the solemn stability of fact, so that such localities as "Arden-terrace," "Lackington-avenue," "Glengariff-crescent," and "Davenport-heights," became common and familiar to the public ear.

The imaginative literature of speculation—industrial fiction it might be called—has reached a very high development in our day. Not content with enlisting all the graces of fancy in the cause of enterprise, heightening the charms of scenery and aiding the interests of romance by historic association, it actually allies itself with the slighter infirmities of our social creed, and exalts the merits of certain favoured spots by the blessed assurance that they are patronised by our betters. Amongst the many advantages fortune bestowed upon the grand Glengariff scheme was conspicuously one—Dukes had approved, and Earls admired it. "We are happy to learn," said the *Post*, "that the Marquis of Duckington has entrusted the construction of his marine villa at Glengariff to the exquisite skill and taste of Sir Jeffrey Blocksley, who is at present engaged in preparing Noddleton Hall for his Grace the Duke of Bowood, at the same charming locality." In the *Herald* we find: "The Earl of Hanaper is said to have paid no less than twelve thousand guineas for the small plot of land in which his bathing-lodge at

Glengariff is to stand. It is only right to mention, that the view from his windows will include the entire bay, from the Davenport Obelisk to Dunn Lighthouse—a prospect unequalled, we venture to assert, in Europe.” And, greater than these, the *Chronicle* assures us, the arrival of a Treasury Lord, accompanied by the Chairman of the Board of Works, on Monday last, at Glengariff, proclaimed the gracious intention of her Majesty to honour this favoured spot by selecting it for a future residence. “‘Queen’s Cot,’ as it will be styled, will stand exactly on the site formerly occupied by the late residence of Lord Glengariff, well known as the Hermitage, and be framed and galleried in wood in the style so frequently seen in the Tyrol.”

Where is the born Briton would not feel the air balmier and the breeze more zephyr-like if he could see that it waved a royal standard? where the Anglo-Saxon who would not think the sea more salubrious that helped to salt a Duke? where the alley that was not cooler if a Marquis walked beneath its shadow? It is not that honest John Bull seeks the intimacy or acquaintance of these great folk—he has no such weakness or ambition—he neither aspires to know or be known of them; the limit of his desire is to breathe the same mountain air, to walk the same chain pier, to be fed by their poulterer and butcher, and, maybe, buried by their undertaker. Were it the acquaintanceship he coveted—were it some participation in the habits of refined and elegant intercourse, far be it from us to say one word in disparagement of such ambition, satisfied as we are that in all that concerns the enjoyment of society, for the charms of a conversation where fewest prejudices prevail, where least exaggerations are found, where good feeling is rarely, good taste never, violated, the highest in rank are invariably the most conspicuous. But, unhappily, these are not the prizes sought after, the grand object being attained if the Joneses and Simpkinses can spend their autumn in the same locality with titled visitors, bathe in the same tides, and take their airings at the same hours. What an unspeakable happiness might it yield them to know they had been “bored” by the same monotony, and exhausted by the same ennui!

They who were curious in such literature fancied they could detect the fine round hand of Mr. Hanks in the glowing descriptions of Glengariff. Brought up at the feet of that Gamaliel of appraisers, George Robins, he really did credit to his teachings. Nor was it alone the present delights of the spot he dwelled upon, but expatiated on the admirable features

of an investment certain to realise, eventually, two or three hundred per cent. It was, in fact, like buying uncleared land in the Bush, upon which, within a few years, streets and squares were to be found, purchasing for a mere nominal sum whole territories that to-morrow or next day were to be sold as building lots and valued by the foot.

As in a storm the tiniest creeks and most secluded coves feel, in their little bays, the wild influence that prevails without, and see their quiet waters ruffled and wave-tossed, so, too, prosperity follows the same law, and spreads its genial sunshine in a wide circle around the spot it brightens. For miles and miles along the shore the grand Glengariff scheme diffused the golden glory of its success. Little fishing villages, solitary cottages in sequestered glens, lonely creeks, whose yellow strands had seldom seen a foot-track—all felt it. The patient habits of humble industry seemed contemptible to those who came back to their quiet homesteads after seeing the wondrous doings at Glengariff—and marvellous, indeed, were the narratives of sudden fortunes. One had sold his little “shebeen” for more gold than he knew how to count; another had become rich by the price of the garden before his door; the shingly beach seemed paved with precious stones, the rocks appeared to have grown into bullion. How mean and despicable seemed daily toil: the weary labour of the field, the precarious life of the fisherman, in presence of such easy prosperity, were ignoble drudgery. It savoured of superior intelligence to exchange the toil of the hands for the exercise of speculative talents, and each began to compute what some affluent purchaser might not pay for this barren plot, what that bleak promontory might not bring in this market of fanciful bidders.

Let us note the fact that the peasant was not a little amused by the absurd value which the rich man attached to objects long familiar and unprized by himself. The picturesque and the beautiful were elements so totally removed from all his estimate of worth, that he readily ascribed to something very like insanity the great man’s fondness for them. That a group of stone pines on a jutting cliff, a lone and rocky island, a ruined wall, an ancient well canopied by a bower of honeysuckle, should be deemed objects of price, appeared to be the most capricious of all tastes; and, in his ignorance as to what imparted this value, he glutted the market with everything that occurred to him. Spots of ground the least attractive, tenements occupying the most ill-chosen sites, ugly and mis-

shapen remains of cottages long deserted, were all vaunted as fully as good or better than their neighbours had sold for thousands. It must be owned, the market price of any article seemed the veriest lottery imaginable! One man could actually find no purchaser for four acres of the finest potato-garden in the county; another got a hundred guineas for his good-will of a bit of stony land that wouldn't feed a goat; here was a slated house no one would look at, there was a mud hovel a Lord and two Members of Parliament were outbidding each other over these three weeks. Could anything be more arbitrary or inexplicable than this? in fact, it almost seemed as if the old, the ruinous, the neglected, and the unprofitable had now usurped the place of all that was neat, orderly, or beneficial.

If we have suffered ourselves to be led into these remarks, they are not altogether digressionary. The Hermitage, we have said, was doomed. Common report alleged that the Queen had selected the spot for her future residence, and of a truth it was even worthy of such a destiny. Whether in reality Royalty had made the choice, or that merely it was yet a speculation in hope of such an event, we cannot say, but an accomplished architect had already begun the work of reconstruction, and more than two-thirds of the former building were now demolished. The fragment that still remained was about the oldest part of the cottage, and not the least picturesque. It was a little wing with three gables to the front, the ancient framework, of black oak, quaintly ornamented with many a tasteful device and grim decoration. A little portico, whose columns were entirely concealed by the rich foliage of a rhododendron, stood before the windows, whose diamond panes told of an era when glass bore a very different value; a gorgeous flower-plat, one rich expanse of rare tulips and ranunculi, sloped from the portico to the river, over which a single plank formed a bridge. The stream, which was here deep and rock-bottomed, could be barely seen between the deep hanging branches of the weeping-ash, but its presence might be recognised by the occasional plash of a leaping trout, or the still louder stroke of a swan's wing as he sailed in solemn majesty over his silent domain. So straggling and wide-spreading had been the ancient building, that, although a part of the condemned structure, the clank of the mason's trowel and the turmoil of the falling materials could scarcely be heard in this quiet, sequestered spot. Here Sybella Kellett

still lived—left behind by her great protectors—half in forgetfulness. Soon after the triumph of the Ossory Bank they had removed to Dublin, thence to London, where they now awaited the passage of a special Bill to make the Glengariff allotment scheme a chartered company. Although the great turn in the fortunes of Glengariff had transmitted to other hands the direction and guidance of events there, her zeal, energy, and, above all, her knowledge of the people, especially marked her out as one whose services were most valuable. English officials, new to Ireland and its ways, quickly discovered the vast superiority she possessed over them in all dealings with the peasantry, whose prejudices she understood, and whose modes of thought were familiar to her. By none were her qualities more appreciated than by Mr. Hanks. There was a promptitude and decision in all she did, a ready-witted intelligence to encounter whatever difficulty arose, and a bold, purpose-like activity of character about her that amazed and delighted that astute gentleman. "She's worth us all, Sir," he would say to Sir Elkanah Paston, the great English engineer—"worth us all. Her suggestions are priceless; see how she detected the cause of those shifting sands in the harbour, and supplied the remedy at once; mark how she struck out that line of road from the quarries; think of her transplanting those pinasters five-and-thirty feet high, and not a failure—not one failure amongst them; and there's the promontory, now the most picturesque feature of the bay; and as to those terraced gardens that she laid out last week, I vow and declare Sir Joseph himself couldn't have done it better. And then, after a day of labour—riding, perhaps, five-and-twenty or thirty miles—she'll sit down to her desk and write away half the night."

If it had not been for one trait, Mr. Hanks would have pronounced her perfection; there was, however, a flaw, which the more he thought over the more did it puzzle him. She was eminently quick-sighted, keen to read motives and appreciate character, and yet with all this she invariably spoiled every bargain made with the people. Instead of taking advantage of their ignorance and inexperience, she was continually on the watch over *their* interests; instead of endeavouring to overreach them, she was mindful of their advantage, cautiously abstaining from everything that might affect their rights.

"We might have bought up half the county for a song, Sir, if it were not for that girl," Mr. Hanks would say; "she has

risen the market on us everywhere. 'Let us be just,' she says. I want to be just, Miss Kellett, but just to ourselves."

A pleasant phrase is that same one "just to ourselves," but Mr. Hanks employed it like many other people, and never saw its absurdity.

Now Sybella Kellett fancied that justice had a twofold obligation, and found herself very often the advocate of the poor man, patiently sustaining his rights, and demanding their recognition. Confidence, we are told by a great authority, is a plant of slow growth, and yet she acquired it in the end. The peasantry submitted to her, claims the most complex and involved; they brought their quaint old contracts, half illegible by time and neglect; they recited, and confirmed by oral testimony, the strangest possible of tenures; they recounted long narratives of how they succeeded to this holding, and what claims they could prefer to, that; histories that would have worn out almost any human patience to hear, and especially trying to one whose apprehension was of the quickest. And yet she would listen to the very end, make herself master of the case, and give it a deep and full consideration. This done, she decided; and to that decision none ever objected. Whatever her decree, it was accepted as just and fair, and even if a single disappointed or discontented suitor could have been found, he would have shrunk from avowing himself the opponent of public opinion.

It was, however, by the magic of her sympathy, by the secret charm of understanding their natures, and participating in every joy and sorrow of their hearts, that she gained her true ascendancy over them. There was nothing feigned or factitious in her feeling for them; it was not begotten of that courtly tact which knows names by heart, remembers little family traits, and treasures up an anecdote, it was true, heart felt, honest interest in their welfare. She had watched them long and closely; she knew that the least amiable trait in their natures was also that which oftenest marred their fortunes—distrust, and she set herself vigorously to work to uproot this vile, pernicious weed, the most noxious that ever poisoned the soil of a human heart. By her own truthful dealings with them she inspired truth, by *her* fairness she exacted fairness, and by the straightforward honesty of her words and actions they grew to learn how far easier and pleasanter could be the business of life where none sought to overreach his neighbour.

To such an extent had her influence spread, that it became at last well-nigh impossible to conclude any bargain for land without her co-operation. Unless her award had decided, the peasant could not bring himself to believe that his claim had met a just or equitable consideration; but whatever Miss Bella decreed was final and irrevocable. From an early hour each morning the suitors to her court began to arrive. Under a large damson-tree was placed a table, at which she sat, busily writing away, and listening all the while to their long-drawn-out narratives. It was her rule never to engage in any purchase when she had not herself made a visit to the spot in question, ascertained in person all its advantages and disadvantages, and speculated how far its future value should influence its present price. In this way she had travelled far and near over the surrounding country, visiting localities the wildest and least known, and venturing into districts where a timid traveller had not dared to set foot. It required all her especial acuteness, oftentimes, to find out—from garbled and incoherent descriptions—the strange and out-of-the-way places no map had ever indicated. In fact, the wild and untravelled country was pathless as a sea, and nothing short of her ready-witted tact had been able to navigate it.

She was, as usual, busied one morning with her peasant levee when Mr. Hanks arrived. He brought a number of letters from the post, and was full of the importance so natural to him who has the earliest intelligence.

“Great news, Miss Bella,” said he, gaily—“very great news. One of the French Princes announces his intention to build a villa here. He requires a small park of some forty or fifty acres, access to the sea, and a good anchorage for his yacht. This note here will give all particulars. Here is an application from Sir Craven Tollemache; he wants us to build him a house on any picturesque site near the shore, and contracts to take it on lease. Here is a demand for one hundred shares, fifty to be exchanged for shares in the Boquantilla, Cobalt, and Zinc Mines, now at a premium. Kelsal and Waterline wish to know what facilities we would afford them to establish yacht-building in Crooke’s Harbour. If liberally dealt with, they propose to expend fifty thousand on permanent improvements. Lord Drellington is anxious for a house in Lackington-crescent. I believe he is too late. There are also seven applications for ‘Arden House,’ which, I fancy, has been promised to Sir Peter Parkeswith. Founde’s Cliff, too, is eagerly run after; that

sketch you made of it has been a great success. We must extend our territories, Miss Bella—we must widen our frontier; never was there such a hit. It is the grandest operation of Mr. Dunn's life. Seven hundred and twenty-three thousand pounds—one-fourth already paid, the remainder available at short calls. Those Welsh people, Plimmon and Price, are eager about our lead mine, and we can run up the shares there to sixty-five or seventy whenever we please. Here, too, are the plans for the new Casino and Baths. This is the sketch of a Hydropathic Establishment—a pet scheme of Lord Glengariff's; we must let him have it. And here is Truevane's report about the marble. It will serve admirably for every purpose but statuary. Our slate slabs are pronounced the finest ever imported. We mean to flag the entire terrace along the sea with them. This is from Dunn himself; it is very short, and hurriedly written: 'Chevass will move the second reading of our bill on Tuesday. I have spoken to the Chancellor, and it is all right. Before it goes to the Lords we must have a new issue of shares. I want, at least, two hundred and fifty thousand by the end of the year.' He says nothing about politics; indeed, he is so occupied with gaieties and fine company, he has little time for business. He only mentions, that 'till we have done with this stupid war we cannot hope for any real extension to our great enterprise.'"

"And does he put our miserable plottings here in competition with the noble struggle of our glorious soldiers in the Crimea?" cried she, now breaking silence for the first time.

Mr. Hanks actually started with the energy of her manner, and for a moment could scarcely collect himself to reply.

"Well, you know, Miss Bella," said he, faltering at every word, "we are men of peace—we are people engaged in the quiet arts of trade—we cannot be supposed indifferent to the interests our lives are passed in forwarding."

"But you are Englishmen besides, Sir; not to say you are brothers and kinsmen of the gallant men who are fighting our enemies."

"Very true, Miss Bella—very true; they have their profession and we have ours. We rejoice in their success as we participate in all the enthusiasm of their gallantry. I give you my word of honour I could'n't help filling out an extra glass of sherry yesterday to the health of that fine fellow who dashed at the Russian staff and carried off a colonel prisoner. You saw it, I suppose, in the papers?"

"No. Pray let me hear it," said she, eagerly.

"Well, it was an observation—a 'reconnaissance' I think they called it—the Russians were making of the Sardinian lines, and they came so near, that a young soldier—an orderly of General La Marmora's—heard one of them say, 'Yes, I have the whole position in my head.' Determining that so dangerous a fellow should not get back to head quarters, he watched him closely, till he knew he could not be mistaken in him, and then setting off at speed—for he was mounted—he crossed the Tchernaya a mile or so further up, and waiting for them, he lay concealed in a small copse. His plan was to sell his own life for this officer's; but whether he relinquished that notion, or that chance decided the event, there's no knowing. In he dashed, into the midst of them, cut this colonel's bridle-arm across at the wrist, and taking his horse's reins rode for it with all speed towards his own lines. He got a start of thirty or forty stride before they could rally in pursuit, which they did actually up to the very range of the rifle pits, and only retired at last when three fell dead or wounded."

"But *he* escaped?" cried she.

"That he did, and carried his prisoner safe into the lines, and presented him to the general, modestly remarking he is safer here than over yonder—pointing to Sebastopol; and strangest part of the whole thing he turns out to be an Englishman."

"An Englishman?"

"Yes. He was serving, by some strange accident, on General La Marmora's staff, as a simple orderly, though evidently a man of some education and position—one of those wild young bloods, doubtless, that had gone too fast at home, but who really do us no discredit when it comes to a question of pluck and daring."

"Do us no discredit!" cried she; "and have you nothing more generous to say of one who has asserted the honour of England so nobly in the face of an entire army? Do us no discredit! why, one such feat as this adds more glory to the nation than all the schemes of all the jobbers who deal in things like these." And she threw contemptuously from her the coloured plans and pictures that littered the table.

"Dear me, Miss Kellett, here's a whole ink-bottle spilled over the Davenport Obelisk."

"Do us no discredit!" burst out she again. "Are we really the nation of shopkeepers that France calls us? Have we no

pride save in successful bargaining? no glory save in growing rich? Is money getting so close at the nation's heart that whatever retards or delays its hoardings savours of misfortune? When you were telling me that anecdote, how I envied the land that owned such a hero; and when you said he was our own—our countryman—my heart felt bursting with gratitude. Tell me his name."

"His name—his name—how strange that I should have forgotten it, for, as I told you, I toasted his health only yesterday."

"Yes you remember the sherry!" said she, bitterly.

Mr. Hanks's cheek tingled and grew crimson. It was a mood of passionate excitement he had never witnessed in her before, and he was astounded at the change in one usually so calm and self-possessed. It was then in no small confusion that he turned over the letter before him to find something which might change the topic in discussion.

"Ah, here is a matter," said he, referring once more to Dunn's letter. "He says: 'Beg of Miss Kellett to see a small holding called "Kilmaganagh;" I cannot exactly say where, but it lies to the north of Bantry Bay. I suspect that it possesses few recommendations such as would entitle it to a place in the "scheme," but, if to be had on reasonable terms, I would be well pleased to obtain it. Driscoll had effected a part purchase, but having failed to pay up the instalment due last March, his claim lapses. By the way, can you ascertain for me where this same Driscoll has gone to? It is now above four months since I have heard of him. Trace him if possible. As to Kilmaganagh, tell Miss K. that she may indulge that generosity she is not indisposed to gratify, and be on this occasion a liberal purchaser.' He fancies you lean a little to the country people, Miss Bella," said Hanks, as he stole a cautious glance at her now heightened colour. "'I will even consent to what is called a fancy price for the tenement, and certainly not lose it for a hundred or two above its actual value. Look to this, and look to Driscoll.' There's a riddle here, Miss Bella, if we knew, how to read it," said Hanks as he looked over the few lines once more.

"I have but scant wits to read riddles, Mr. Hanks. Let us see where this place lies." And she turned to a large map on the table, the paths and cross-paths of which had been marked in different coloured inks by her own hand, "I remember the name. There was an old tower called Kilmaganagh Fort,

which used to be visible from the bay. Yes, here it is—a strange, wild spot, too, and, as Mr. Dunn opines, scarcely available for his great scheme.”

“But he has so many great schemes,” said Hanks, with a sly and sidelong glance towards her.

Sybella, however, paid no attention to the remark, but leaning over the map, continued to trace out the line of route to the spot in question. “By crossing Bantry Bay at Gortalassy, one might save above thirty miles of way. I have been over the road before, and remember it well.”

“And you really mean to undertake the journey?” asked Hanks, in some astonishment.

“Of course I do. I ask nothing better than to be fully occupied, and am well pleased when in so doing I can exchange the desk for the saddle, or almost better, the stern-sheets of a Bantry hooker. You are not a woman, and you cannot feel, therefore, the sense of pride inspired by mere utility.”

“I wish I might ask you a favour, Miss Kellett,” said he, after a moment’s thought.

“A favour of *me!*” said she, laughing, as though the idea amused her.

“Yes,” said he, resuming. “I would beg to be permitted to accompany you on this same journey. I have never seen any of these wild, untravelled tracts, and it would be a great additional charm to visit them in your company.”

“So far as I am concerned, I grant you the permission freely, but it were well for you to remember that you must not only be well mounted, but prepared to ride over some rough country. I go usually as the crow flies, and, as nearly as I can, the same pace too. Now, between this and Loughbeg, there are at least three trying fences: one a wall with a deep drop beyond it, and another a steep bank, where I remember that somebody narrowly escaped having an ugly fall; there’s a small estuary, too, to cross, near Gortalassy. But I am ashamed to enumerate these petty obstacles; such as they are, they are the only ones—there are none on my part.”

“When do you mean to set out?” asked Hanks, in a tone far less eager than his former question.

“There’s a full moon to-morrow night, so that leaving this about midnight we might reach the bay by six or seven o’clock, and then, if we should be fortunate with the wind, arrive at Kilmaganagh by about four o’clock. Taking there three or four hours to see the place, we could start again about eight, or even nine——”

"Good Heavens! that gives nothing for repose—no time to recruit."

"You forget there are fully five hours on board the boat. I'll not be the least offended if you sleep the entire time. If there's not wind enough to take in a reef, I'll give the tiller to old Mark Spillane, and take a sleep myself."

"It is really like a Tartar journey," said the terrified Hankses.

"I have told you the worst of it, I must own," said she, laughing, "for I feel I have no right to obtain your escort on false pretences."

"And you would go alone over this long distance—land and sea?"

"Land and sea are very grand words, Mr. Hankses, for some five-and-twenty miles of heather and a few hours in an open boat; but such as they are, I would go them alone."

Mr. Hankses would like to have said something complimentary—something flattering, but it did not exactly occur to him how he was to do it. To have exalted her heroism would be like a confession of his own poltroonery; to have seen any surprising evidence of boldness in her daring might possibly reflect upon her delicacy. He felt—none could have felt more thoroughly—that she was very courageous and very full of energy, but somehow these were precisely qualities he was not in a position to estimate, and he knew in his heart how feebly any words of his would fall in praise of such gifts.

"Well, I'll go," said he, with a sigh, the words being addressed to himself, though uttered loud enough to catch Sybella's ears.

"Nay, Mr. Hankses," said she, smiling good-naturedly, "be advised by me, have nothing to say to this journey; it will not reward you."

"Who knows?" said he, catching at the last words with a suddenness that half startled her.

"The country," continued she, "is bleak and dreary till you approach the sea, and there all depends on weather, since, Bantry may be bright as an Italian lake, or overshadowed with cloud and fog like a Dutch sea-coast. The people are poor, and scarcely civilised—in fact, I feel no pride in exhibiting such a tract to a stranger."

"I'd like to go," said he again, with a shade more of firmness in the accent.

"Be it so," said she, half talking to herself. "Of this Ireland of long ago there will soon be no vestige. It will be interesting,

doubtless, to see the last receding steps of a departing race." She paused for a while, and then, in a voice full, and round, and forcible, added, "I am not, however, one of those who think that to promote the advancement of this country you must treat the Irishman as the Yankee does the Red Indian. Others, I am aware, are differently minded. They would say, Pour into this land the fresh energies of Yorkshire—the active industry of the Lothians. Mr. Dunn, all Irish though he be, is of this opinion. Are you, too, a disciple of this school, Sir?"

"Well, I own—I protest—I am free to confess, Miss Kellett," mumbled Hanks, in deep embarrassment, "I have always thought the Irish so indolent and so lazy——"

"Take this note, Patsy," broke in Sybella, as she hastily scribbled a few lines on a piece of paper—"take this note over to Bantry, and, as you pass Gortalassy, tell Mark Spillane I'll want the 'hooker' to-morrow at daybreak. 'Indolence,' Mr. Hanks, and 'laziness,' would scarcely cross seventeen miles of mountain, as that boy will, in less than three hours. I'll back him—and I know of fifty more, his equals—against the 'West Riding,' to-morrow."

"Well, but when we speak of industry——"

"I know that," broke she in; "these are the habits of an active, not of a hardworking, people. But you were talking a few minutes back of the Crimea. Are my poor countrymen backward there? Do you detect in them any shrinking from their share of toil—any sluggish reluctance to the hard work of campaigning life? Ask their officers this—I mean their own officers, for they alone can speak for them."

"That's the very essence of Irish barbarism," cried Hanks, with the triumph of a man who had detected a blot. "They must be appealed to in a peculiar language—addressed in a peculiar way. If one hasn't the key to their very strange natures, there's nothing to be done with them."

"And no great disparagement in all that," cried she, boldly. "At all events, the reproach will apply to what Mr. Hanks would call their 'betters.' Without the key to the hearts of your great men on 'Change, where would the 'Grand Glengariff scheme' have been? If we had not bethought us that there are such passions as avarice and usury, how could we have devised that ingenious speculation by which my Lord is to become a millionaire, and Mr. Dunn his prophet?"

What was it in her tone, as she spoke these words, that made Mr. Hanks tremble? Had she really divined that there

was rottenness in the core of that stupendous enterprise? Did she know, or did she even suspect, that the great venture was not the solvent, safe, secure investment it professed to be? Very terrible were such fears, and Mr. Hanks could not endure without investigating them.

"But surely, Miss Kellett," he began, "you can draw a broad distinction between the antiquated prejudices of a peasantry and the clear-headed calculations of a clever capitalist. Here we have a splendid plan—a grand scheme—not merely to enrich the fundholder——"

"Oh, Sir, spare me, I beseech you, that eloquent peroration about the benefits to be bestowed upon the people, of which I am beginning to grow weary. I have lent my own humble aid to propagate that notion—I had almost said that fallacy. Only hear me out," said she, as he tried to interrupt. "I began my duties here in the most sanguine of all moods. Heaven knows not what dreams I had of a land of abundance and content. Well, I have seen the abundance—the wealth has really poured in—every one is richer, better fed, clothed, housed, and cared for, and almost in an equal ratio are they grown more covetous, grasping, envious, and malevolent——You won't let me finish," cried she, as he showed an increasing impatience. "Well, perhaps as we stroll along the cliffs to-morrow, you will be more disposed to listen—that is, if I have not already terrified you from accepting the companionship."

"Oh no! by no means; but how are we to go—do we drive?"

"Drive! why, my dear Mr. Hanks, it is only a Kerry pony has either legs or head for the path we must follow. Cast your eye along this coast line; jagged and fanciful as it looks, it conveys no notion of its rugged surface of rock, and its wild and darksome precipices. Take my word for it, you have as much to learn of the scenery as of the temperament of the land."

"But I'd like to go," repeated he, his accent being marvellously little in accordance with the sentiment.

"Nothing easier, Sir. I'll give orders to have a pony—a most reliable pony—ready for you here to-morrow evening, when I shall expect you at tea."

Mr. Hanks bowed his grateful acknowledgments.

"I suspect, Sir," said she, playfully, "that I have guessed your reason for this journey."

"My reason, my dear Miss Kellett," said he, in confusion—"my reason is simply the pleasure and honour of *your* company,

and the opportunity of visiting an interesting scene with—with with——”

“No matter for the compliment, but I began really to imagine that you wished to learn my secret of bargaining with the people—that you wanted to witness one of these contracts you have heard so much of. Well, Sir, you shall have it: our sole secret is, we trust each other.”

CHAPTER LXXVIII.

A BRIDLE-PATH.

SIBELLA KELLETT was less than just when she said that the country which lay between the Hermitage and Bantry Bay had few claims to the picturesque. It may possibly have been that she spoke with reference to what she fancied might have been Mr Hanks's judgment of such a scene. There was, indeed, little to please an English eye; no rich and waving woods—no smiling corn-fields—no expanse of swelling lawn or upland of deep meadow, but there was a wild and grand desolation, a waving surface fissured with deep clefts opening on the sea, which boomed in many a cavern far beneath. There were cliffs upright as a wall, hundreds of feet in height, on whose bare summits some rude remains were still traceable—the fragment of a church, or shrine, or some lone cross, symbol of a faith that dated from centuries back. Heaths of many a gorgeous hue—purple, golden, and azure—clad a surface ever changing, and ferns that would have overtopped a tall horseman mingled their sprayey leaves with the wild myrtle and the arbutus. The moon was at her full as Sybella, accompanied by Mr. Hanks, and followed by an old and faithful groom—a servant of her father's in times past—took her way across this solitary tract.

If my reader is astonished that Mr. Hanks should have offered himself for such an expedition, it is but fair to state that the surprise was honestly shared in by that same gentleman. Was it that he made the offer in some moment of rash enthusiasm?—had any impulse of wild chivalry mastered his calmer reason?—was it that curious tendency which occasionally seems to sway Cockney natures to ascend mountains, cross dangerous

ledges, or peep into volcanic craters? I really cannot aver that any of these was his actual motive, while I have my suspicion that a softer, a gentler, though a deeper sentiment influenced him on this occasion. Mr. Hanks—to use a favourite phrase of his own—“had frequent occasion to remark” Miss Kellett’s various qualities of mind and intelligence; he had noticed in her the most remarkable aptitude for “business.” She wrote and answered letters with a facility quite marvellous; details, however complicated, became by her treatment simple and easy; no difficulties seemed to deter her; and she possessed a gift—one of the rarest and most valuable of all—never to waste a moment on the impracticable, but to address herself, with a sort of intuition, at once, to only such means as could be rendered available.

Now, whether it was that Mr. Hanks anticipated a time when Mr. Dunn, in his greatness, might soar above the meaner cares of a business life—when, lifted into the elysian atmosphere of the nobility, he would look down with contemptuous apathy at the struggles and cares of enterprise—or whether Mr. Hanks, from sources of knowledge available peculiarly to himself, knew that the fortunes of that great man were not built upon an eternal foundation, but shared in that sad lot which threatens all things human with vicissitude—whether stern facts and sterner figures taught him that all that splendid reputation, all that boundless influence, all that immense riches, might chance, one day or other, to be less real, less actual, and less positive, than the world now believed them to be—whether, in a word, Mr. Hanks felt that Fortune, having smiled so long and so blandly on her favourite, might not, with that capriciousness so generally ascribed to her, assume another and very different aspect,—whatever the reason, in short, he deemed the dawn of his own day was approaching, and that, if only true to himself, Mr. Hanks was sure to be the man of the “situation,” the next great star in the wide hemisphere that stretches from the Stock Exchange to—the Marshalsea, and includes all from Belgravia to Boulogne-sur-Mer.

Miss Kellett’s abilities, her knowledge, her readiness, her tact, a certain lightness of hand in the management of affairs that none but a woman ever possesses, and scarcely one woman in ten thousand combines with the more male attributes of hard common sense, pointed her out to Mr. Hanks as one eminently suited to aid his ambition. Now, men married for money every day in the week, and why not marry for what secured not alone

money, but fame, station, and influence? Mr. Hanks was a widower; his own experience of married life had not been fortunate. The late Mrs. Hanks was a genius, and had the infirmities of that unsocial class: she despised her husband, quarrelled with him, lampooned him in a book, and ran off with the editor of a small weekly review that eulogised her novel. It was supposed she died in Australia—at least, she never came back again; and as the first lieutenant gravely confirms the sun's altitude when he mutters, "Make it noon," so Mr. Hanks, by as simple a fiat, said, "Make her dead," and none disputed him. At all events, he was a widower by brevet, and eligible to be gazetted a husband at any moment.

Miss Kellett possessed many personal attractions, nor was he altogether insensible to them; but he regarded them, after all, pretty much as the intended purchaser of an estate might have regarded an ornamental fish-pond or a flower-garden on the property—something, in short, which increased the attraction, but never augmented the value. He was glad they were there, though they by no means would have decided him to the purchase. He knew, besides, that the world set a high price on these things, and he was not sorry to possess what represented value of any kind. It was always scrip—shares—securities, even, although one could not well say how, when, or where the dividend was to be paid.

There was another consideration, too, weighed materially with him. The next best thing, in Mr. Hanks's estimation, to marrying into a good connexion, was to have none at all—no brothers, no sisters-in-law, no cousins-german or otherwise, no uncles, aunts, or any good friends of parental degree. Now, except a brother in the Crimea—with an excellent chance of being killed—Sybella had none belonging to her. In the happy phrase of advertisements, she had no incumbrances. There was no one to insist upon this or that settlement—none to stipulate for anything in her favour; and these were, to his thinking, vast advantages. Out of these various considerations our reader is now to fashion some of the reasons which induced Mr. Hanks to undertake an excursion alike foreign to his tastes and uncongenial to his habits; but as a placeman would not decline the disagreeables of a sea voyage as the preliminary to reaching the colony he was to govern, so this gentleman consoled himself by thinking that it was the sole penalty attached to a very remunerative ambition.

If Sybella was not without some astonishment at his proposal

to accompany her, she never gave herself the slightest trouble to explain the motive. She acceded to his wish from natural courtesy and the desire to oblige, and that was all. He had been uniformly polite and civil in all their intercourse; beyond that, he was not a person whose companionship she would have sought or cared for, and so they rode along, chatting indifferently of whatever came uppermost—the scene, the road, the season, the condition of the few people who formed the inhabitants of this wild region, and how their condition might possibly be affected by the great changes then in progress near them.

Guarded and cautious as he was in all he said, Mr. Hanks could not entirely conceal how completely he separated in his own mind the success of the great scheme and the advantage that might accrue to the people; nor was she slow to detect this reservation. She took too true and just a view of her companion's temper and tone to approach this theme with the scruples that agitated herself, but at once said:

“Let us suppose this scheme to be as prosperous as its best friends can wish it, Mr. Hanks; that you all—I mean, you great folk, who are directors, chairmen, secretaries, and so forth—become as rich and powerful as you desire, see your shares daily increasing in value, your speculations more and more lucrative, what becomes of the people—the poor man—all this while?”

“Why, of course he participates in all these successes; he grows rich too; he sells what he has to sell at a better market, obtains higher wages for his labour, and shares all our prosperity.”

“Granted. But who is to teach him the best use of this newly-acquired prosperity? You, and others like you, have your tastes already formed; the channels are already made in which your affluence is to run: not so with him; abundance may—nay, it will, suggest waste, which will beget worse. Who are to be his guides?—who his examples?”

“Oh, as to that, his increase of fortune will suggest its own appropriate increase of wants. He will be elevated by the requirements of his own advancing condition, and even if he were not, it is not exactly any affair of ours; we do our part when we afford him the means of a higher civilisation.”

“I don't think so. I suspect that not alone do you neglect a duty, but that you inflict a wrong. But come, I will take another alternative—I will suggest—what some are already predicting—that the project will not prove a success.”

"Who says that?" cried Hanks, hastily, and in his haste forgetting his habitual caution of manner.

"Many have said it. Some of those whose opinions I am accustomed to place trust in, have told myself that the speculation is too vast—disproportioned to the country—undertaken on a scale which nothing short of imperial resources could warrant——"

"But surely you do not credit such forebodings?" broke he in.

"It is of little consequence how far *I* credit them. I am as nothing in the event. I only would ask, What if all were to fail?—what if ruin were to fall upon the whole undertaking, what is to become of all those who have invested their entire fortunes in the scheme? The great and affluent have many ventures—they trust not their wealth to one argosy; but how will it be with those who have embarked their all in one vessel?"

Mr. Hanks paused, as if to reflect over his reply, and she continued: "It is a question I have already dared to address to Mr. Dunn himself. I wrote to him twice on the subject. The first time I asked what guarantee could be given to small shareholders—those, for instance, who had involved their whole wealth in the enterprise. He gave me no answer. To my second application came the dry rejoinder, that I had possibly forgotten in whose service I was retained; that I drew my resources from the Earl of Glengariff, and not from the peasantry, whose advocate I had constituted myself.

"Well?" cried Hanks, curious to hear what turn the correspondence took.

"Well," said she, smiling gently, "I wrote again. I said it was true I had forgotten the fact of which he reminded me, but I pleaded in excuse that neither the Earl nor her Ladyship had refreshed my memory on the circumstance by any replies to eight, or, I believe, nine letters I sent them. I mentioned, too, that though I could endure the slight of this neglect for myself, I could not put up with it for the sake of those whose interest I watched over. Hear me out," said she, perceiving that he was about to interrupt. "It had become known in Glengariff that all the little fortune I was possessed of—the few hundred pounds Mr. Dunn had rescued for me out of the wreck of our property—was invested in this scheme. Mr. Dunn counselled this employment of the money, and I consented to it. Now, this trustfulness on my part induced many others to imitate what they deemed my example."

"And you really did make this investment?" said Hanks, whose eagerness could not brook longer delay.

"Yes," said she, with a quiet smile, "though evidently, had I consulted Mr. Hanks, he would never have counselled the step." After a moment, she resumed: "I have half a mind to tell you how it happened."

"I pray you let me hear it."

"Well, it was in this way: Shortly after that affair of the Ossory Bank—the run for gold, I mean—I received a few hurried lines from Mr. Dunn, urging me to greater exertion on the score of the Glengariff scheme, and calling upon me to answer certain newspaper insinuations against its solvency, and so forth. Before replying to these attacks, I was of course bound to read them; and shall I confess it, such was the singular force of the arguments they employed, so reasonable did their inferences appear, and so terrible the consequences should the plan prove a failure, that I for the first time perceived that it was by no means impossible the vast superstructure we were raising might be actually on the brink of a volcano. I did not like exactly to tell Mr. Dunn these misgivings; in fact, though I attempted two or three letters to that effect, I could not, without great risk of offending, convey my meaning, and so I reflected and pondered over the matter several days, working my brain to find some extrication from the difficulty. At last, I bethought me of this: Mr. Dunn was my guardian; by his efforts was the small fragment of property that fell to me rescued and saved. What if I were to request him to invest the whole of it in this scheme? Were its solvency but certain, where could the employment of the money be safer or more profitable? If he consented, I might fairly suppose my fears were vain, and my misgivings unfounded. If, however, he showed any reluctance, even backwardness, to the project, the very phrase he might employ to dissuade me would have its especial significance, and I could at once have something to reason upon. Well, I wrote to him, and he answered by the next post: 'I fully coincide with your suggestion, and acting on it, you are now the possessor of fifty-four shares in the Allotment. As the moment for buying in is favourable, it is a thousand pities you could not make an equally profitable investment for your brother, whose twelve hundred pounds is yielding the very inglorious interest of the Bank.'"

"And so you took the shares?" said Hanks, sighing; then added, "But let me see—at what rate did you buy?"

"I am ashamed to confess, I forget; but I know the shares were high?"

"After the Ossory run," muttered he—"that was about September. Shares were then something like one hundred and twenty-seven and a quarter; higher afterwards—higher the whole month of November; shaky towards the end of the year—very shaky, indeed, in January. No, no," said he to himself, "Dunn ought not to have done it."

"I perceive," said she, half smiling, "Mr. Hanks opines that the money had been better in the Bank."

"After all," continued he, not heeding her remark, "Dunn couldn't do anything else. You own yourself that if he had attempted to dissuade you, you would immediately have taken alarm—you'd have said 'This is all a sham. All these people will find themselves "let in" some fine morning;' and as Dunn could very readily make good your few hundred pounds, why he was perfectly justified in the advice he gave."

"Not when his counsel had the effect of influencing mine," said she, quickly—"not when it served to make me a perfidious example to others. No, no, Mr. Hanks; if this scheme be not an honest and an upright one, I accept no partnership in its details."

"I am only putting a case, remember," said Hanks, hurriedly—"a possible but most improbable case. I am supposing that a scheme with the finest prospectus, the best list of directors, the most respectable referees in the empire, to be—what shall I say?—to be sickly—yes, sickly—in want of a little tonic treatment, generous diet, and so forth."

"You'll have to follow me here, Mr. Hanks," broke in Sybella; "the pathway round this cliff only admits one at a time. Keep close to the rock, and if your head be not steady, don't look down."

"Good Heavens! we are not going round that precipice!" cried Hanks, in a voice of the wildest terror.

"My servant will lead your horse, if you prefer it," said she, without answering his question; "and mind your footing, for the moss is often slippery with the spray."

Sybella made a signal with her whip to the groom, who was now close behind, and then, without awaiting for more, moved on. Hanks watched her as she descended the little slope to the base of a large rock, around which the path wound itself on the very verge of an immense precipice. Even from where he now stood the sea could be seen surging and booming hundreds

of feet below, and although the night was calm and still, the ever restless waves beat heavily against the rocks, and sent masses of froth and foam high into the air. He saw her till she turned the angle of the path, and then she was lost to his view.

"I don't think I have head for it. I'm not used to this kind of thing," said Hankses, in a voice of helpless despondency to the old groom, who now stood awaiting him to dismount. "Is there much danger? Is it as bad as it looks?"

"'Tis worse when you get round the rock there," said the groom, "for it's always going down you are, steeper than the roof of a house, with a shingle footing, and sloping outwards."

"I'll not go a step. I'll not venture," broke in Hankses.

"Indeed, I wouldn't advise your honour," said the man, in a tone too sincere to be deemed sarcastic.

"I know my head couldn't bear it," said he, with the imploring accents of one who entreated a contradiction. But the old groom, too fully convinced of the sentiment to utter a word against it, was now only thinking of following his mistress.

"Wait a moment," cried Hankses, with an immense effort. "If I were once across this"—he was going to add an epithet, but restrained himself—"this place, is there nothing more of the same kind afterwards?"

"Isn't there, faith!" cried the man. "Isn't there the Clunk, where the beast has to step over gullies five-and-thirty or forty feet deep? Isn't there Tim's Island, a little spot where you must turn your horse round with the sea four hundred feet under you? Isn't there the Devil's Nose——"

"There, there, you needn't go on my good fellow; I'll turn back."

"Look where she is now," said the man, pointing with his whip to a rocky ledge hundreds of feet down, along which a figure on horseback might be seen creeping slowly along. "'Tis there, where she's stealing along now, you need the good head and the quick hand. May I never!" exclaimed he, in terror, "if them isn't goats that's coming up to meet her! Merciful Joseph! what'll she do? There, they are under the horse's legs, forcing their way through! Look how the devils are rushing all round and about her! If the beast moves an inch——" A wild cry broke from the old man here, for a fragment of rock, displaced by the rushing herd, had just come thundering down the cliff, and splashed into the sea beneath. "The Heavens be praised! she's safe," muttered he, piously crossing himself; and then, without a word more, and as if angry at his own delay, he pressed his horse forward to follow her.

It was in vain Hankses cried to him to wait—to stop for only an instant—that he, too, was ready to go—not to leave him and desert him there—that he knew not where to turn him, nor could ever retrace his way,—already the man was lost to view and hearing, and all the vain entreaties were uttered to the winds. As for Sybella, her perilous pathway gave her quite enough to do not to bestow a thought upon her companion; nor, indeed, had she much recollection of him till the old groom overtook her on the sandy beach, and recounted to her, not without a certain touch of humour, Mr. Hankses's terror and despair.

"It was cruel to leave him, Ned," said she, trying to repress a smile at the old man's narrative. "I think you must go back, and leave me to pursue my way alone."

"Sorra one o' me will go back to the likes of him. 'Tis for your own self, and ne'er another, I'd be riskin' my neck in the same spot," said he resolutely.

"But what's to become of him, Ned? He knows nothing of the country; he'll not find his way back to Glengariff."

"Let him alone; devil a harm he'll come to. 'Tis chaps like that never comes to mischief. He'll wander about there till day breaks, and, maybe, find his way to Duff's Mill, or, at all events, the boy with the letter-bag from Caherclough is sure to see him."

Even had this last assurance failed to satisfy Sybella, it was so utterly hopeless a task to overrule old Ned's resolve, that she said no more, but rode on in silence. Not so Ned; the theme afforded him an opportunity for reflecting on English character and habits, which was not to be lost.

"I'd like to see your brother John turn back and leave a young lady that way," said he, recurring to the youth whose earliest years he had watched over.

No matter how impatiently, even angrily, Bella replied to the old man's bigoted preference of his countrymen, Ned persisted in deploring the unhappy accident by which fate had subjected the finer and more gifted race to the control and dominion of an inferior people. To withdraw him effectually from a subject which to an Irish peasant has special attraction, she began to tell him of the war in the East and of her brother Jack, the old man listening with eager delight to the achievements of one he had carried about in his arms as a child.

Her mind, filled with the wondrous stories of private letters—the intrepid daring of this one, the noble chivalry of that—she soon succeeded in winning all his attention. It was singular, however, that of all the traits she recorded, none

made such a powerful appeal to the old man's heart as the generous self-devotion of those women who, leaving home, friends, country, and all, gave themselves up to the care of the sick and wounded. He never wearied of hearing how they braved death in its most appalling shape amidst the pestilential airs of the hospital, in the midst of such horrors as no pen can picture, taking on them the most painful duties, accepting fatigue, exhaustion, and peril as the common incidents of life, braving scenes of agony such as in very recital sickened the heart, descending to all that was menial in their solicitude for some poor sufferer, and all this with a benevolence and a kindness that made them seem less human beings than ministering angels from Heaven.

"Oh, Holy Joseph! isn't it yourself ought to be there?" cried the old man, enthusiastically. "Was there ever your like to give hope to a sick heart? Who ever could equal you to cheer up the sinking spirit, and even make misery bearable? Miss Bella, darling, did you never think of going out?"

"Ay, Ned, a hundred times," said she, sighing drearily. "I often, too, said to myself, There's not one of these ladies—for they are ladies born and bred—who hasn't a mother, father, sisters, and brothers dear to her, and to whom she is herself dear. She leaves a home where she is loved, and where her vacant place is daily looked at with sorrow, and yet here am I, who have none to care for, none to miss me, who would carry over the sea with me no sorrows from those I was leaving, for I am friendless, surely I am well fitted for such a task——"

"Well," said he, eagerly, as she seemed to hesitate, "well, and why——"

"It was not fear held me back," resumed she. "It was not that I shrank from the sights and sounds of agony that must have been more terrible than any death; it was simply a hope—a wish, perhaps, more than a hope—that I might be doing service to those at home here, who, if I were to leave them, would not have one on their side. Perhaps I overrated what I did, or could do; perhaps I deemed my help of more value than it really was; but every day seemed to show me that the people needed some one to counsel and to guide them—to show them where their true interests lay, and by what little sacrifices they could oftentimes secure a future benefit."

"That's throe, every word of it. Your name is in every cabin, with a blessing tacked to it. There's not a child doesn't say a prayer for you before he goes to sleep; and there's many

a grown man never thought of praying at all till he axed a blessing for yourself!"

"With that, too," resumed she, "was coupled power, for my Lord left much to my management. I was able to help the deserving, to assist the honest and industrious; now I aided this one to emigrate, now I could contribute a little assistance of capital. In fact, Ned, I felt they wanted *me*, and I knew I liked *them*. There was one good reason for not going away. Then there were other reasons," said she, falteringly. "It is not a good example to give to others to leave, no matter how humble, the spot where we have a duty, to seek out a higher destiny. I speak as a woman."

"And is it thrue, Miss Bella, that it's Mister Dunn has it all here under his own hand? that the Lord owns nothing only what Dunn allows him, and that the whole place down to Kenmare river is Dunn's?"

"It is quite true, Ned, that the control and direction of all the great works here are with Mr. Dunn. All the quarries and mines, the roads, harbours, quays, bridges, docks, houses, are all in his hands."

"Blessed hour! and where does he get the money to do it all?" cried he, in amazement.

Now, natural as was the question, and easy of reply as it seemed, Sybella heard it with something almost like a shock. Had the thought not occurred to her hundreds of times? And, if so, how had she answered it? Of course there could be no difficulty in the reply; of course such immense speculations, such gigantic projects as Mr. Dunn engaged in, supplied wealth to any amount. But equally true was it that they demanded great means; they were costly achievements these great lines of railroad, these vast harbours. Nor were they always successful; Mr. Hanks himself had dropped hints about certain "mistakes," that were very significant. The splendid word "Credit" would explain it all, doubtless, but how interpret credit to the mind of the poor peasant? She tried to illustrate it by the lock of a canal, in which the water is momentarily utilised for a particular purpose, and then restored, unimpaired, to the general circulation; but Ned unhappily damaged the imagery by remarking, "But what's to be done if there's no water?" Fortunately for her logic, the road became once more only wide enough for one to proceed at a time, and Sybella was again left to her own musings.

Scarcely conscious of the perilous path by which she advanced,

she continued to meditate over the old man's words, and wonder within herself how it was that he, the poor, unlettered peasant, should have conceived that high notion of what her mission ought to be—when and how her energies should be employed. She had been schooling herself for years to feel that true heroism consisted in devoting oneself to some humble, unobtrusive career, whose best rewards were the good done to others, where self-denial was a daily lesson, and humility a daily creed; but, do what she could, there was within her heart the embers of the fire that burned there in childhood. The first article of that faith taught her that without danger there is no greatness—that in the hazardous conflicts where life is ventured, high qualities only are developed. What but such noble excitement could make heroes of those men, many of whom, without such stimulus, had dropped down the stream of life unnoticed and undistinguished? “And shall I,” cried she, aloud, “go on for ever thus, living the small life of petty cares and interests, confronting no dangers beyond a dark December day, encountering no other hazards than the flippant rebuke of my employer?”

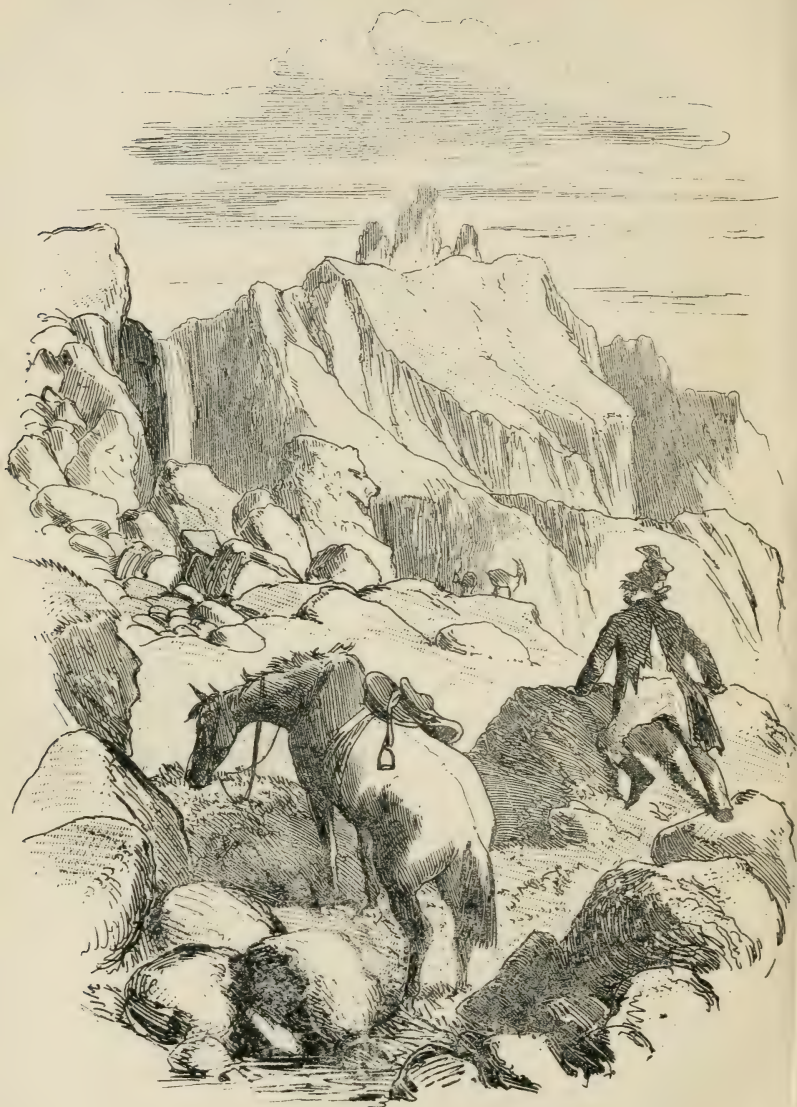
“There’s the yawl, Miss Bella: she’s tacking about, waiting for us,” said Ned, as he pointed to a small sail-boat like a speck in the blue sea beneath; and at the same instant a little rag of scarlet bunting was run up to the peak, to show that the travellers had been seen from the water.

CHAPTER LXXIX.

THE DISCOVERY.

It is possible that my reader might not unwillingly accompany Sybella as she stepped into the little boat, and tripping lightly over the "thwarts," seated herself in the stern-sheets. The day was bright and breezy, the sea scarcely ruffled, for the wind was off the land; the craft, although but a fishing boat, was sharp and clean built, the canvas sat well on her, and, last of all, she who held the tiller was a very pretty girl, whose cheek, flushed with exercise, and loosely waving hair, gave to her beauty the heightened expression of which care occasionally robbed it. The broad bay, with its mountain background and its wide sea reach, studded with tall three-masters, was a fine and glorious object, and as the light boat heeled over to the breeze, and the white foam came rustling over the prow, Sybella swept her fair hand through the water and bathed her brow with the action of one who dismissed all painful thought, and gave herself to the full enjoyment of the hour. Yes, my dear reader, the companionship of such a girl on such a day, in such a scene, was worth having; and so even those rude fishermen thought it, as, stretched at full length on the shingle ballast, they gazed half bashfully at her, and then exchanged more meaning looks with each other as she talked with them.

Just possible is it, too, that some curiosity may exist as to what became of Mr. Hanks. Did that great projector of industrial enterprise succeed in retracing his steps with safety? did he fall in with some one able to guide him back to Glen-gariff? did he regain the Hermitage after fatigue, and peril and much self-reproach for an undertaking so foreign to his



Mountain landscape.

ways and habits? and did he vow to his own heart that this was to be the last of such excursions on his part? Had he his misgivings, too, that his conduct had not been perfectly heroic? and did he experience a sense of shame in retiring before a peril braved by a young and delicate girl? Admitted to a certain share of that gentleman's confidence, we are obliged to declare that his chief sorrows were occasioned by the loss of time, the amount of inconvenience, and the degree of fatigue the expedition had caused him. It was not till late in the afternoon of the day that he chanced upon a fisherman on his way to Bantry to sell his fish. The poor peasant could not speak nor understand English, and after a vain attempt at explanation on either side, the colloquy ended by Hankses joining company with the man, and proceeding along with him, whither he knew not.

If we have not traced the steps of Sybella's wanderings, we are little disposed to linger along with those of Mr. Hankses, though, if his own account were to be accepted, his journey was a succession of adventures and escapes. Enough if we say that he at last abandoned his horse amid the fissured cliffs of the coast, and, as best he might, clambered over rock and precipice, through tall mazes of wet fern and deep moss, along shingly shores and sandy beaches, till he reached the little inn at Bantry, the weariest and most worn-out of men, his clothes in rags, his shoes in tatters, and he himself scarcely conscious, and utterly indifferent as to what became of him.

A night's sound sleep and a good breakfast were already contributing much to efface the memory of past sufferings, when Sybella Kellett entered his room. She had been over to the cottage, had visited the whole locality, transacted all the business she had come for, and only diverged from her homeward route on hearing that Mr. Hankses had just arrived at Bantry. Rather apologising for having left *him* than accusing him of deserting *her*, she rapidly, proceeded to sketch out her own journey. She did not dwell upon any incidents of the way—had they been really new or strange she would not have recalled them—she only adverted to what had constituted the object of her coming—the purchase of the small townland which she had completed.

"It is a dear old place," said she, "of a fashion one so rarely sees in Ireland, the house being built after that taste known as Elizabethan, and by tradition said to have once been inhabited by the poet Spenser. It is very small, and so hidden by a dense beech wood, that you might pass within fifty yards of the

door and never see it. This rude drawing may give you some idea of it."

"And does the sea come up so close as this?" asked Hanks, eagerly.

"The little fishing-boat ran into the cove you see there; her mainsail dropped over the new-mown hay."

"Why, it's the very thing Lord Lockewood is looking for. He is positively wild about a spot in some remote out-of-the-way region; and then, what you tell me of its being a poet's house will complete the charm. You said Shakspeare——"

"No, Spencer, the poet of the 'Faërie Queene,'" broke she in, with a smile.

"It's all the same; he'll give it a fanciful name, and the association with its once owner will afford him unceasing amusement."

"I hope he is not destined to enjoy the pleasure you describe."

"No?—why not, pray?"

"I hope and trust that the place may not pass into his hands; in a word, I intend to ask Mr. Dunn to allow me to be the purchaser. I find that the sum is almost exactly the amount I have invested in the Allotment scheme—these same shares we spoke of—and I mean to beg as a great favour—a very great favour—to be permitted to make this exchange. "I want no land—nothing but the little plot around the cottage."

"The cottage formerly inhabited by the poet Spenser, built in the purest Elizabethan style, and situated in a glen—you said a glen, I think, Miss Kellett?" said Hanks—"in a glen, whose wild enclosure, bosomed amongst deep woods, and washed by the Atlantic——"

"Are you devising an advertisement, Sir?"

"The very thing I was doing, Miss Kellett. I was just sketching out a rough outline of a short paragraph for the *Post*."

"But remember, Sir, I want to possess this spot. I wish to be its owner——"

"To dispose of, of course, hereafter—to make a clear three, or four, or five thousand by the bargain, eh?"

"Nothing of the kind, Mr. Hanks. I mean to acquire enough—some one day or other—to go back and dwell there. I desire to have what I shall always, to myself, at least, call mine—my home. It will be as a goal to win, the time I can come back and live there. It will be a resting-place for poor Jack when he returns to England."

Mr. Hanks paused. It was the first time Miss Kellett had referred to her own fortunes in such a way as permitted him to take advantage of the circumstance, and he deliberated with himself whether he ought not to profit by the accident. How would she receive a word of advice from him? Would it be well taken? might it possibly lead to something more? Would she be disposed to lean on his counsels? and, if so, what then? Ay, Mr. Hanks, it was the "what then?" was the puzzle. It was true his late conduct presented but a sorry emblem of that life-long fidelity he thought of pledging; but if she were the clear-sighted, calm-reasoning intelligence he believed, she would lay little stress upon what, after all, was a mere trait of a man's temperament. Very rapidly, indeed, did these reflections pass through his mind, and then he stole a glance at her as she sat quietly sipping her tea, looking a very ideal of calm tranquility. "This cottage," thought he, "has evidently taken a hold of her fancy. Let me see if I cannot turn the theme to my purpose." And with this intention he again brought her back to speak of the spot, which she did with all the eagerness of true interest.

"As to the association with the gifted spirit of song," said Mr. Hanks, soaring proudly into the style he loved, "I conclude that to be somewhat doubtful of proof, eh?"

"Not at all, Sir. Spenser lived at a place called Kilcoleman, from which he removed for two or three years, and returned. It was in this interval he inhabited the cottage. Curiously enough, some manuscript in his writing—part of a correspondence with the Lord-Deputy—was discovered yesterday when I was there. It was contained in a small oak casket with a variety of other papers, some in quaint French, some in Latin. The box was built in so as to form a portion of a curiously carved chimney-piece, and chance alone led to its discovery."

"I hope you secured the documents?" cried Hanks eagerly.

"Yes, Sir; here they are, box and all. The Rector advised me to carry them away for security sake." And so saying, she laid upon the table a massively-bound and strong-built box, of about a foot in length.

It was with no inexperienced hand that Mr. Hanks proceeded to investigate the contents. His well practised eye rapidly caught the meaning of each paper as he lifted it up, and he continued to mutter to himself his comments upon them. "This document is an ancient grant of the lands of Cloughrennin to the monks of the abbey of Castlerosse, and bears date 1104.

It speaks of certain rights reserved to the Baron Hugh Pritchard Conway. Conway—Conway," mumbled he, twice or thrice, that's the very name I tried and could not remember yesterday, Miss Kellett. You asked me about a certain soldier whose daring capture of a Russian officer was going the round of the papers. The young fellow had but one arm, too; now I remember, his name was Conway."

"Charles Conway. Was it Charles Conway?" cried she, eagerly; "but it could be no other—he had lost his right arm."

"I'm not sure which, but he had only one, and he was called an orderly on the staff of the Piedmontese General."

"Oh, the noble fellow! I could have sworn he would distinguish himself. Tell me it all again, Sir; where did it happen, and how, and when?"

Mr. Hanks's memory was now to be submitted to a very searching test, and he was called on to furnish details which might have puzzled "Our own Correspondent." Had Charles Conway been rewarded for his gallantry? what notice had his bravery elicited? Was he promoted, and to what rank? Had he been decorated, and with what order? Were his wounds, as reported, only trifling? Where was he now?—was he in hospital, or on service? She grew impatient at how little he knew—how little the incident seemed to have impressed him. "Was it possible," she asked, "that heroism like this was so rife that a meagre paragraph was deemed enough to record it—a paragraph, too, that forgot to state what had become of its hero?"

"Why, my dear Miss Kellett," interposed he, at length, "one reads a dozen such achievements every week."

"I deny it, Sir," cried she, angrily. "Our soldiers are the bravest in the world; they possess a courage that asks no aid from the promptings of self-interest, nor the urgings of vanity; they are very lions in combat; but it needs the chivalrous ardour of the gentleman, the man of blood and lineage, to conceive a feat like this. It was only a noble patriotism could suggest the thought of such an achievement."

"I must say," said Hanks, in confusion, "the young fellow acquitted himself admirably; but I would also beg to observe that there is nothing in the newspaper to lead to the conclusion you are disposed to draw. There's not a word of his being a gentleman."

"But I know it, Sir—the fact is known to me. Charles Conway is a man of family; he was once a man of fortune: he

had served as an officer in a Lancer regiment; he had been extravagant, wild, wasteful, if you will."

"Why, it can't be the Smasher you're talking of?—the great swell that used to drive the four chesnuts in the Park, and made the wager he'd go in at one window of Staggs and Mantle's, and out at t'other?"

"I don't care to hear of such follies, Sir, when there are better things to be remembered. Besides, he is my brother's dearest friend, and I will not hear him spoken of but with respect. Take *my* word for it, Sir, I am but asking what you had done, without a hint, were he only present."

"I believe you—by Jove, I believe you!" cried Hankses, with an honesty in the tone of his voice that actually made her smile. "And so, this is Conway the Smasher!"

"Pray, Mr. Hankses, recal him by some other association. It is only fair to remember that he has given us the fitting occasion."

"Ay, very true—what you say is perfectly just; and, as you say, he is your brother's friend. Who would have thought it!—who would have thought it!"

Without puzzling ourselves to inquire what it was that thus excited Mr. Hankses's astonishment, let us observe that gentleman, as he turns over, one by one, the papers in the box, muttering his comments, meanwhile, to himself: "Old tittle-deeds—very old indeed—all the ancient contracts are recited. Sir Gwellem Conway must have been a man of mark and note in those days. Here we find him holding 'in capite' from the king, twelve thousand acres, with the condition that he builds a strong castle and a 'bawn.' And these are, apparently, Sir Gwellem's own letters. Ah! and here we have him or his descendant called Baron of Ackroyd and Bedgellert, and claimant to the title of Lackington, in which he seems successful. This is the writ of summons calling him to the Lords as Viscount Lackington. Very curious and important these papers are—more curious, perhaps, than important—for in all likelihood there have been at least half a dozen confiscations of these lands since this time."

Mr. Hankses's observations were not well attended to, for Sybella was already deep in the perusal of a curious old letter from a certain Dame Marian Conway to her brother, then Sheriff of Cardigan, in which some very strange traits of Irish chieftain life were detailed.

"I have an antiquarian friend who'd set great store by these

old documents, Miss Kellett," said Hanks, with a sort of easy indifference. "They have no value save for such collectors; they serve to throw a passing light over a dark period of history, and perhaps explain a bygone custom or an obsolete usage. What do you mean to do with them?"

"Keep them. If I succeed in my plans about the cottage, these letters of Spenser to Sir Lawrence Esmond are in themselves a title. Of course, if I fail in my request, I mean to give them to Mr. Dunn."

"These were Welsh settlers, it would seem," cried Hanks, still bending over the papers. "They came originally from Abergedley."

"Abergedley!" repeated Sybella, three or four times over. "How strange!"

"What is strange, Miss Kellett?" asked Hanks, whose curiosity was eagerly excited by the expression of her features.

Instead of reply, however, she had taken a small note-book from her pocket, and sat with her eyes fixed upon a few words written in her own hand: "The Conways of Abergedley—of what family—if settled at any time in Ireland, and where?" These few words, and the day of the year when they were written, recalled to her mind a conversation she had once held with Terry Driscoll.

"What is puzzling you, Miss Kellett?" broke in Hanks; "I wish I could be of any assistance to its unravelment."

"I am thinking of 'long ago;' something that occurred years back. Didn't you mention," asked she, suddenly, that Mr. Driscoll had been the former proprietor of this cottage.

"Yes, in so far as having paid part of the purchase-money. Does his name recal anything to interest you, Miss Kellett?"

If she heard, she did not heed his question, but sat deep sunk in her own musings.

If there was any mood of the human mind that had an especial fascination for Mr. Hanks, it was that frame of thought which indicated the possession of some mysterious subject—some deep and secret theme which the possessor retained for himself alone—a measure of which none were to know the amount, to which none were to have the key. It would be ignoble to call this passion curiosity, for in reality it was less exercised by any desire to fathom the mystery, than it was prompted by an intense jealousy of him who thus held in his own hands the solution of some portentous difficulty. To know on what schemes other men were bent—what hopes and

fears filled them—by what subtle trains of reasoning they came to this conclusion or to that, were the daily exercises of his intelligence. He was eternally, as the phrase is, putting things together, comparing events, confronting this circumstance with that, and drawing inferences from every chance and accident of life. Now, it was clear to him Miss Kellett had a secret—or, at least, had the clue to one. Driscoll was “in it,” and this cottage was “in it,” and, not impossibly too, some of these Conways were “in it.” There was something in that note-book—how was he to obtain sight of it? The vaguest line—a word—would be enough for him. Mr. Hanks remembered how he had once committed himself and his health to the care of an unskilful physician simply because the man knew a fact which he wanted, and did worm out of him during his attendance. He had, at another time, undertaken a short voyage in a most unsafe craft, with a drunken captain, because the stewardess was possessed of a secret, of which even in his sea-sickness he obtained the key. Over and over again had he assumed modes of life he detested, dissipation the most distasteful to him, to gain the confidence of men that were only assailable in these modes; and now he bethought him, that if he only had a glimmering of his present suspicion, the precipice, and the narrow path, and the booming sea below, had all been braved, and he would have followed her unflinchingly through every peril with this goal before him. Was it too late to reinstate himself in her esteem? He thought not; indeed, she did not seem to retain any memory of his defection. At all events, there was little semblance of its having influenced her in her manner towards him.

“We shall meet at Glengariff, Mr. Hanks,” said Sybella, rising, and replacing the papers in the box. “I mean to return by the coast road, and will not ask you to accompany me.”

“It is precisely what I was about to beg as a favour. I was poorly yesterday—a nervous headache, an affection I am subject to—in short, I felt unequal to any exertion, or even excitement.”

“Pray let me counsel you to spare yourself a journey of much fatigue with little to reward it. Frequency and long habit have deprived the mountain tract of all terror for me, but I own that to a stranger it is not without peril. The spot where we parted yesterday is the least dangerous of the difficulties, and so I would say be advised, and keep to the high road.”

Now there was not the slightest trace of sarcasm in what

she said; it was uttered in all sincerity and good faith, and yet Mr. Hanks could not help suspecting a covert mockery throughout.

"I'm determined she shall see I am a man of courage," muttered he to himself; and then added, aloud, "You must permit me to disobey you, Miss Kellett. I am resolved to bear you company."

There was a dash of decision in his tone that made Sybella turn to look at him, and, to her astonishment, she saw a degree of purpose and determination in his face very unlike its former expression. If she did not possess the craft and subtlety which long years had polished to a high perfection in him, she had that far finer and more delicate tact by which a woman's nature reads man's coarser temperament. She watched his eye, too, and saw how it rested on the oaken box, and, even while awaiting her answer, never turned from that object.

"Yes," said she to herself, "there is a game to be played out between us, and yonder is the stake."

Did Mr. Hanks divine what was passing in her mind? I know not. All he said was,

"May I order the horses, Miss Kellett?"

"Yes, I am ready."

"And this box, what is to be done with it? Best to leave it here in the possession of the innkeeper. I suppose it will be safe?" asked he, half timidly.

"Perfectly safe; it would be inconvenient to carry with us. Will you kindly tell the landlord to come here?"

No sooner had Mr. Hanks left the room on his errand, than Sybella unlocked the box, and taking out the three papers in which the name of Conway appeared, relocked it. The papers she as quickly consigned to a small bag, which, as a sort of sabretasche; formed part of her riding costume.

Mr. Hanks was somewhat longer on his mission than appeared necessary, and when he did return there was an air of some bustle and confusion about him, while between him and the landlord an amount of intimacy had grown up—a sort of confidence was established—that Bella's keen glance rapidly read.

"An old-fashioned lock, and doubtless worth nothing, Miss Kellett," said Hanks, as with a contemptuous smile he regarded the curiously carved ornament of the keyhole. You have the key, I think?"

"Yes; it required some ingenuity to withdraw it from where, I suppose, it has been rusting many a year."

"It strikes me I might as well put a band over the lock and affix my seal. It will convey the notion of something very precious inside," added he, laughing, "and our friend here, Mr. Rorke, will feel an increased importance in the guardianship of such a treasure."

"I'll guard it like goold, Sir, that you may depend on," chimed in the landlord.

Why was it that, as Bella's quick glance was bent upon him, that he turned so hastily away, as if to avoid the scrutiny?

Do not imagine, valued reader, that while this young girl scanned the two faces before her, and tried to discover what secret understanding subsisted between these two men—strangers but an hour ago—that she herself was calm and self-possessed. Far from it; as little was she self-acquitted. It was under the influence of a sudden suspicion flashing across her mind—whence or how she knew not—that some treachery was being planned, that she withdrew these documents from the box. The expression of Hanks's look, as it rested on the casket, was full of significance. It meant much, but of what nature she could not read. The sudden way he had questioned her about Driscoll imparted a link of connexion between that man and the contents of the box, or part of them; and what part could that be except what concerned the name of Conway? If these were her impulses, they were more easily carried out than forgiven, and in her secret heart she was ashamed of her own distrust, and of what it led her to do.

"It would be a curious question at law," said Hanks, as he affixed the third and last seal—"a very curious question, who owns that box. Not that its contents would pay for the litigation," added he, with a mocking laugh; "but the property being sold this morning, with an unsettled claim of Driscoll's over it, and the purchaser being still undeclared—for I suppose you bought it in for the Earl, or for Mr. Dunn, perhaps——"

"No, Sir, in my own name, and for myself, waiting Mr. Dunn's good pleasure to confirm the sale in the way I have told you."

"Indeed!" exclaimed he, looking with an unfeigned admiration at a young girl capable of such rapid and decisive action—"so that you really may consider yourself its owner?"

"I do consider myself its owner," was her calm reply.

"Then pray excuse my officiousness in this sealing up. I hope you will pardon my indiscreet zeal."

She smiled without answering, and the blood mounted to

Mr. Hanks's face and forehead till they were crimson. He, too, felt that there was a game between them, and was beginning to distrust his "hand."

"Are we to be travelling companions, Mr. Hanks?" asked she. And though nothing was said in actual words, there was that in the voice and manner of the speaker that made the question run thus: "Are we, after what we have just seen of each other, to journey together?"

"Well, if you really wish me to confess the truth, Miss Kellett, I must own I am rather afraid of my head along these mountain paths—a sort of faintness, a rushing of blood to the brain, and a confusion—in short, Nature never meant me for a chamois hunter, and I should bring no credit on your training of me."

"Your resolve is all the wiser, Sir, and so to our next meeting." She waved him a half familiar, half cold farewell, and left the room.

Mr. Hanks saw her leave the town, and he loitered about the street till he could mark two mounted figures ascending the mountain. He then ordered a chaise to the door with all speed.

"Will you take it now, Sir, or send for it, as you said at first?" asked the innkeeper, as he stood with the oak box in his hands.

"Keep it till I write—keep it till you hear from me; or, no, put it in the chaise—that's better."

CHAPTER LXXX.

THE DOUBLE BLUNDER.

SHORT as had been Sybella's absence from the Hermitage, a vast number of letters had arrived for her in the mean while. The prospect of a peace, so confidently entertained at one moment, was now rudely destroyed by the abrupt termination of the Vienna conferences, and the result was a panic in the money-market.

The panic of an army rushing madly on to victory; the panic on shipboard when the great vessel has struck, and, after three or four convulsive throes, the mighty masts have snapped, and the blue water, surging and bounding, has riven the hatchways and flooded the deck; the panic of a mob as the charge of cavalry is sounded, and the flash of a thousand sabres is seen through the long vista of a street; the panic of a city stricken by plague or cholera, are all dreadful and appalling things, and have their scenes of horror full of the most picturesque terror,—still are there incidents of an almost equal power when that dread moment has arrived which is called a "Panic on 'Change."

It was but yesterday, and the world went well and flourishingly, mills were at work, foundries thundered with their thousand hammers, vessels sailed forth from every port, and white-sailed argosies were freighted with wealth from distant colonies. None had to ask twice for means to carry out his speculations—for every enterprise there was capital—and now scarcely twenty-four hours have passed, and all is changed. A despatch has been received in the night; a messenger has arrived at Downing-street; the Minister has been aroused from his sleep to hear that we have met some great reverse;

a terrible disaster has befallen us; two line-of-battle ships, whose draught of water was too great, have grounded under an enemy's fire; in despite of the most heroic resistance, they have been captured; the union-jacks are on their way to Moscow. Mayhap the discomfiture, less afflicting to national pride, is the blunder of a cavalry officer, or the obstinacy of an envoy. Little matter for the cause, we have met a check. Down goes credit, and up go the discounts; the mighty men of millions have drawn their purse-strings, and not a guinea is to be had; the City is full of sad-visaged men in black, presaging every manner of misfortune: More troops are wanted—more ships; we are going to have an increase of the income-tax—a loan—a renewal of war burdens in fifty shapes! Each fancies some luxury of which he must deprive himself, some expense to be curtailed, and all are taking the dreariest view of a future whose chief feature is to be privation.

So was it now. Amidst a mass of letters was one from Davenport Dunn, written with brevity and in haste. By a mistake, easily made in the hurry and confusion of such correspondence, it was, though intended for Mr. Hanks, addressed to Miss Kellett, the words "Strictly private and confidential" occupying a conspicuous place across the envelope, while lower down was written "Immediate."

It was a very rare event latterly for Mr. Dunn to write to Miss Kellett, nor had she, in all their intercourse, once received from him a letter announced thus "confidential." It was, then, in some surprise, and not without a certain anxiety, that she broke the seal. It was dated "Wednesday, Irish Office," and began thus; "Dear S."—she started—he had never called her Sybella in his life; he had been most punctiliously careful ever to address her as Miss Kellett. She turned at once to the envelope, and read the address, "Miss Kellett, the Hermitage, Glengariff." And yet there could be no mistake. It opened, "Dear S." "He has forgotten a word," thought she; "he meant in his mood of confidence to call me Miss Sybella, and has omitted the title." The letter ran thus: "We have failed at Vienna, as we do everywhere, and in everything. The war is to continue; consequently we are in a terrible mess. Glumthal telegraphs this morning that he will not go on; the Frankfort people will, of course, follow his lead, so that Mount Cenis will be 'nowhere' by the end of the week. I am, however, more anxious about Glengariff, which must be upheld, *for the moment*, at any cost. To-day I can manage to keep up the

shares, perhaps also to-morrow. The old Earl is more infatuated about the scheme than ever, though the accounts he receives from that girl—"That girl," muttered she, "who can he mean?"—"from that girl occasionally alarm him. She evidently has her own suspicions, though I don't clearly see by what they have been suggested. The sooner, therefore, you can possess yourself of the correspondence, the better. I have written to her by this post with a proposition she will most probably accept—advise it, by all means."—"This is scarcely intelligible," said she, once more reverting to the direction of the letter.—"Should the Ministry be beaten on Monday, they mean to dissolve Parliament. Now, they cannot go to the country, in Ireland, without me, and my terms I have already fixed. They *must* give us aid—material, substantial aid; I will not be put off with office or honours—it is no time for either. Meanwhile, I want all the dividend warrants, and a brief sketch of our next statement, for we meet on Saturday. Come what will, the Allotment must be sustained till the new election be announced. I hope Lackington's cheque was duly presented, for I find that his death was known here on the 4th. Where the new Viscount is, no one seems even to guess. Get rid of the girl, and believe me, yours ever,—D. D."

"Surely, there is some strange mystification here," said she, as she sat pondering over this letter. "There are allusions which, had they not been addressed to me, I might have fancied were intended for myself. This girl, whose accounts have terrified Lord Glengariff, and who herself suspects that all is not right, may mean *me*; but yet it is to me he writes, confidently and secretly. I cannot complain that the letter lacks candour—it is frank enough; every word forebodes coming disaster, the great scheme is threatened with ruin, nothing can save it but Government assistance—an infamous compact, if I read it aright. And if all this be so, in what a game have I played a part! This great venture is a swindling enterprise! All these poor people whose hard-earned gains have been invested in it will be ruined; my own small pittance, too, is gone. Good Heavens! to what a terrible network of intrigue and deception have I lent myself! How have I come to betray those whose confidence I strove so hard to gain! This girl—this girl—who is she? and of whom does he speak?" exclaimed she, as, in an outburst of emotion, she walked the room, her whole frame trembling, and her eyes glaring in all the wildness of high excitement.

"May I come in?" whispered a soft voice, as a low tap was heard at the door; and without waiting for leave, Mr. Hanks entered. Nothing could be silkier nor softer than his courteous approach: his smile was the blandest, his step the smoothest, his bow the nicest blending of homage and regard, and, as he took Miss Kellett's hand, it was with the air of a courtier, dashed with the devotion of an admirer. Cruel is the confession that she noticed none—not one—of these traits. Her mind was so engrossed by the letter, that, had Mr. Hanks made his entry in a suit of chain armour, and with a mace in his hand, she would not have minded it.

"I am come to entreat forgiveness—to sue your pardon, Miss Kellett, for a very great offence, of which, however, I am the guiltless offender. The letter which I hold here, and which, as you see, is addressed 'S. Hanks, Esq.,' was certainly intended for you, and not me."

"What—how—misdirected—a mistake in the address?" cried she, eagerly.

"Just so; placed in a wrong enclosure," resumed he, in a tone of well graduated calm. "A blunder which occurs over and over in life, but I am fain to hope has never happened with less serious results."

"In short," said she, hastily, "my letter, or the letter meant for me, came directed to you?"

"Precisely. I have only to plead, as regards myself, that immediately on discovery—and I very soon discovered that it could not have been destined for my perusal—I refolded the epistle and hastened to deliver it to your own hands."

"More discreet and more fortunate than I!" said she, with a very peculiar smile, "since this letter which I hold here, and which bore my address, I now perceive was for you, and this I have not read merely once or twice, but fully a dozen times; in truth, I believe I could repeat it, word for word, if the task were required of me."

What has become of Mr. Hanks's soft and gentle manner? Where are his bland looks, his air of courtesy and kindness, his voice so full of sweetness and deference? Why, the man seems transfixed, his eyeballs are staring wildly, and he actually clutches, not takes, the letter from her hands.

"Why, the first words might have undeceived you," cried he, rudely. "Your name is not Simpson Hanks."

"No, Sir; but it is Sybella, and the writer begins 'Dear S.'—a liberty, I own, I felt it, but one which I fancied my position

was supposed to permit. Pray read on, Sir, and you will see that there was matter enough to puzzle finer faculties than mine."

Perhaps the tone in which she spoke these words was intentionally triumphant—perhaps Mr. Hanks attributed this significance to them causelessly; at all events, he started and stared at her for above a minute steadfastly. He then addressed himself suddenly to the letter.

"Gracious Heavens! what a terrible blunder!" exclaimed he, when he had finished the reading.

"A great mistake, certainly, Sir," said she, calmly.

"But still one of which you are incapable to take advantage, Miss Kellett," said he, with eagerness.

"Is it to the girl who is to be got rid of, Sir, you address this speech? Is it to her whose trustfulness has been made the instrument to deceive others and lure them to their ruin? Nay, Mr. Hanks, your estimate of my forbearance is indeed too high."

"But what would you do, young lady?"

"Do, Sir! I scarcely know what I would not do," burst she in, passionately. "This letter was addressed to *me*. I know nothing of the mistake of its direction; here is the envelope with my name upon it. It is consequently mine—mine, therefore, to publish, to declare to the world, through its words, that the whole of this grand enterprise is a cheat; that its great designer is a man of nothing, living the precarious life of a gambling speculator, trading on the rich man's horde and the poor man's pittance, making market of all, even to his patriotism. I would print this worthy document with no other comment than the words, 'Received by me, Sybella Kellett, this day of September, and sworn to as the handwriting of him whose initials it bears, Davenport Dunn.' I would publish it in such type that men might read it as they went—that all should take warning and put no faith in these unprincipled tricksters. Ay, Sir, and I would cling as my hope of safety from the world's scorn, to that insulting mention of myself, and claim as my vindication that I am the girl to be 'got rid of.' None shall dare to call me complice, since the little I once called my own is lost. But I would do more, Sir. The world I have unwittingly aided to deceive has a full right to an expiation at my hands. I would make public the entire correspondence I have for months back been engaged in. You seem to say 'No' to this. Is it my right you dispute, or my courage to assert the right?"

"You must be aware, Miss Kellett," said he, deprecatingly, "that you became possessed of this letter by a mistake—that you had no right to the intelligence it contains, and, consequently, have none to avail yourself of that knowledge. It may be perfectly true that you can employ it to our detriment. It would, I have little doubt, serve to shake our credit for a day or two; but do you know what misery, what utter ruin your rashness will have caused meanwhile? By the fall of our securities you will beggar hundreds. All whose necessities may require them to sell out on the day of your disclosures will be irretrievably ruined. You meditate a vengeance upon Mr. Dunn, and your blow falls on some poor struggling creatures that you never so much as heard of. I do not speak," continued he, more boldly, as he saw the deep effect his words produced—"I do not speak of the destitution and misery you will spread here—all works stopped—all enterprise suspended—thousands thrown out of employment. These are the certain, the inevitable evils of what you propose to do. And now, let me ask, What are to be the benefits? You would depose from his station of power and influence the only man in the kingdom who has a brain to conceive, or a courage to carry out these gigantic enterprises—the only man of influence sufficient to treat with the Government, and make his own terms. You would dethrone him, to instal in his place some inferior intelligence—some mere creature of profit and loss, without genius or patriotism; and all for what?—for a mere phrase, and that, too, in a letter which was never intended for your eyes."

Mr. Hankes saw that he was listened to, and he continued. Artfully contriving to take the case out of its real issue, he made it appear to Miss Kellett that she was solely impelled by personal motives, and had no other object in view than a vengeance on the man who had insulted her. "And now just throw your eyes over the letter intended for yourself. I only glanced at it, but it seemed to me written in a tone of sincerest well-wishing."

It was so. It contained the offer of a most advantageous position. A new Governor-General of India desired a suitable companion for his daughters, who had lost their mother. He was a nobleman of highest rank and influence. The station was one which secured great advantages, and Dunn had obtained the promise of it in her behalf by considerable exertion on his part. Nay, more. Knowing that her fortune was engaged in the "Allotment scheme," he volunteered to take her shares at

the highest rate they had ever borne, as she would, probably, require immediate means to procure an Indian outfit. The whole wound up with a deeply expressed regret at the loss Glengariff would sustain by her departure; "but all my selfishness," added he, "could not blind me to the injustice of detaining in obscurity one whose destiny so certainly points her out for a station lofty and distinguished."

She smiled at the words, and, showing them to Hanks, said, "It is most unfortunate, Sir, that I should have seen the other letter. I could so readily have yielded myself up to all this flattery, which, even in its hollowness, has a certain charm."

"I am certain Miss Kellett has too much good sense—too much knowledge of life—too much generosity besides——"

"Pray, Sir, let me stop you, or the catalogue of my perfections may become puzzling, not to say that I need all the good gifts with which you would endow me to aid me to a right judgment here. I wish I knew what to do."

"Can you doubt it?"

"If the road be so clear, will you not point it out?"

"Write to Mr. Dunn. Well, let *me* write to him. I will inform him how this mishance occurred. I will tell him that you had read and re-read his letter before discovering the mistake of the address; that, consequently, you are now—so far as this great enterprise is concerned—one of ourselves; that, although you scorn to take advantage of a circumstance thus accidentally revealed, yet that, as chance has put you in possession of certain facts, that—that, in short——"

"That, in short, I ought to profit by my good fortune," said she, calmly, finishing the phrase for him.

"Unquestionably," chimed in Hanks, quickly; "and, what's more, demand very high terms, too. Dunn is a practical man," added he, in a lower and more confidential tone; "nobody knows better when liberality is the best policy."

"So that this is a case for a high price?" asked she, in the same calm tone.

"I'd make it so if I were in your place. I'd certainly say a 'high figure,' Miss Kellett."

"Shall I confess, Sir, that, in so far as knowing how to profit by it, I am really unworthy of this piece of fortune? Is Mr. Hanks enough my friend to enlighten me?"

There was a smile that accompanied this speech which went far—very far—to influence Mr. Hanks. Once again did his

personal fortunes rise before him—once again did he bethink him that this was an alliance that might lead to much.

"I can give you a case in point, Miss Kellett—I mean as to the value of a secret. It was when Sir Robert Peel meditated his change in the Corn-laws. One of the council—it does not matter to say his name—accidentally divulged the secret intention, and a great journal gave no less than ten thousand pounds for the intelligence—ten thousand pounds sterling!"

She seemed to pause over this story, and reflect upon it.

"Now," resumed Hanks, "it is just as likely he'd say, 'Money is scarce just now—your demand comes at an inconvenient moment.' This would be true—there's no gainsaying it—and I'd reply, 'Let me have it in shares—some of the new preference scrip just issued.'"

"How it does allay difficulties to deal with persons of great practical intelligence—men of purpose-like mind," said Sybella, gravely.

"Ah, Miss Kellett, if I could only believe that this was a favourable moment to appeal to you in their behalf—at least in so far as regards one of their number—one who has long admired your great qualities in silence, and said to himself, 'What might she not be if allied to one well versed in life, trained to all its chances and changes——'"

"It never occurred to me to fancy I had inspired all this interest, Sir," said she, calmly.

"Probably because your thoughts never dwelt on *me*," said Hanks, with a most entreating look; "but I assure you," added he, warmly, "the indifference was not reciprocal. I have been long—very long attracted by those shining abilities you display. Another might dwell upon your personal attractions, and say the impression your beauty had made upon him; but beauty is a flower—a perishable hot-house flower. Not," added he, hastily, "that I pretend to be insensible to its fascinations; no, Miss Kellett, I have my weaknesses like the rest!"

Sybella scarcely heard his words. It was but a day before, and a poor unlettered peasant, an humble creature unread in life and human nature, told her that he deemed her one fit for high and devoted enterprise, and that her rightful place was amidst the wounded and the dying in the Crimea. Had he construed her, then, more truly? At all events, the career was a noble one. She did not dare to contrast it any longer with her late life, so odious now did it seem to her, with all its schemes for wealth, its wily plottings and intrigues.

"I am afraid, Sir, I have been inattentive—I fear that my thoughts were away from what you have been saying," said she, hastily.

"Shall I just throw my ideas on paper, Miss Kellett, and wait your answer—say to-morrow?"

"My answer to what, Sir?"

"I have been presumptuous enough to make you an offer of my hand, Miss Kellett," said he, with a half offended dignity. "There are, of course, a number of minor considerations—I call them minor, as they relate to money matters—to be discussed after; for instance, with regard to these shares——"

"It will save us both a world of trouble, Sir, when I thank you deeply for the honour you would destine me, and decline to accept it."

"I know there is a discrepancy in point of years——"

"Pray, Sir, let us not continue the theme. I have given my answer, and my only one."

"Or if it be that any meddling individual should have mentioned the late Mrs. H.," said he, bristling up—"for she is the late, that I can satisfy you upon—I have abundant evidence to show how that woman behaved——"

"You are confiding to me more than I have the right or wish to hear, Sir."

"Only in vindication—only in vindication. I am aware how her atrocious book has libelled me. It made me a perfect martyr for the season after it came out; but it is out of print—not a copy to be had for fifty pounds, if it were offered."

"But really, Sir——"

"And then, Miss Kellett," added he, in a sort of thrilling whisper, "she drank; at first sherry—brown sherry—but afterwards brandy—ay, ma'am, brandy neat, and a matter of a bottle daily. If you only knew what I went through with her—the scenes in the streets, in the playhouses, in coffee-rooms—ay, and police-offices—I give you my sacred word of honour Simpson Hanks was rapidly becoming as great a public scandal as the Rev. Paul Classon himself!"

"Cannot you perceive, Sir, that these details are less than uninteresting to me?"

"Don't say that, Miss Kellett—don't I beg you, or else you'll make me fear that you'll not read the little pamphlet I published, entitled, 'A Brief Statement by Simpson Hanks'—a brochure that I am proud to believe decided the world in my favour."

"Once for all, Mr. Hanks, I decline to hear more of these

matters. If I have not more plainly told you how little they claim to interest me, it is because my own selfish cares fill up my thoughts. I will try to hand you the correspondence Mr. Dunn desires to see in your keeping by to-morrow morning. There are many circumstances will require special explanation in it. However, I will do my best to be ready."

"And my offer, Miss Kellett?"

"I have declined it, Sir."

"But really, young lady, are you well aware of what it is you refuse?" asked he, angrily.

"I will not discuss the question, Sir," said she, haughtily. "Give me that letter I showed you."

"The letter, I opine, is mine, Miss Kellett. The address alone pertains to you."

"Do you mean, then, to retain possession of the letter," asked she, hurriedly.

"I protest, I think it is better—better for all of us—that I should do so. You will pardon me if I observe that you are now under the influence of excited feelings—you are irritated. Any line of action, under such circumstances, will necessarily be deficient in that calm, matured judgment which is mainly your characteristic."

"It needed but this, Sir, to fill up the measure!" exclaimed she, passionately.

"I don't perfectly apprehend you, Miss Kellett."

"I mean, Sir, that this last trait of yours was alone wanting to complete the utter contempt I now feel for my late life and its associates. Mr. Dunn's letter, with all its disgraceful disclosures—your own crafty counsels how best to profit by the accidental knowledge—and now this refusal to restore the letter—this mean distrust based on a breach of confidence——"

"By no means, Madam. In withholding this letter, I maintain it to be my own. I have already explained to you that the address is all you can lay claim to; a recent legal decision is in my favour. It was tried last Hilary term before Justice Whitecroff. The case was *Barnes versus Barnes*."

"If my anger prompt me to rasher acts than my calmer reason might have counselled," broke in Sybella, "remember, Sir, it is to yourself you owe it. At least upon one point you may rely. Whatever I decide to do in this affair, it will not be swayed by any—the slightest—regard for your friends or their interests. I will think of others alone—never once of *them*. Your smile seems to say, 'The war between us is an unequal

one.' I know it. I am a woman, poor, friendless, unprotected; you and yours are rich, and well thought of; and yet, with all this odds, if I accept the conflict I do not despair of victory."

As she left the room and the door closed after her, Mr. Hanks wiped the perspiration from his forehead, and sat down the perfect picture of dismay.

"What *is* she up to?" cried he, three or four times to himself. "If she resolves to make a public scandal of it, there's an end of us! The shares would be down—down to nothing—in four-and-twenty hours! I'll telegraph to Dunn at once!" said he, rising, and taking his hat. "The mischance was his own doing; let him find the remedy himself."

With all that perfection of laconic style which practice confers, Mr. Hanks communicated to Davenport Dunn the unhappy mistake which had just befallen. Under the safeguard of a cypher used between them he expressed his deepest fears for the result, and asked for immediate counsel and guidance.

This despatch, forwarded by telegraph, he followed by a long letter, entering fully into all the details of the mischance, and reporting with—it must be acknowledged—a most scrupulous accuracy an account of the stormy scene between Miss Kellett and himself. He impressed upon his chief that no terms which should secure her silence would be too high, and gently insinuated that a prompt and generous offer on Dunn's part might not impossibly decide the writer to seal his devotion to the cause by making the lady Mrs. Hanks. "Only remember," added he, "it must be in cash or approved bills."

Partly to illustrate the difficulty of the negotiation he was engaged in, partly to magnify the amount of the sacrifice he proposed to make, he depicted Sybella in colours somewhat less flattering than ardent love usually employs. "It is clear to me now," wrote he, "from what I witnessed to-day, that neither you nor I ever understood this girl aright. She has a temper of her own, and an obstinacy perfectly invincible. Acting on the dictate of what she fancies to be her conscience, she is quite capable of going to any extreme, and I have the strongest doubt that she is one to be moved by affection or deterred by fear." After a little more of this eulogistic strain, he wound up by repeating his former generous proposal. He adroitly pointed out that it was in the interest of only such a patron he could ever dream of so great a sacrifice; and then, in that half-jocular way in which he often attained to all the real and business like elements of a project, he added, "Say ten thousand,

and the 'match' will come off—a very moderate stake, if you only remember the 'forfeit.' ”

In a brief postscript he mentioned the discovery of the ancient document found at the cottage, with, as he said, “some curious papers about the Conway family. These I have duly sealed up in the box, and retain in my possession, although Miss K. has evidently an eye upon them.

“Write fully and explicitly whatever you mean to do; should you, however, fully agree to what I propose, telegraph back to

“Yours, ever faithfully,

“SIMPSON HANKES.

“They have come to tell me she is packing up her things, and has sent a twenty pound note to be changed.”

CHAPTER LXXXI.

DOWNING-STREET.

IF our story had a hero—which it has not—that hero would be Mr. Davenport Dunn himself, and we might, consequently, feel certain compunctious scruples as to the length of time that has elapsed since we last saw him. When we parted, however, we took care to remind our reader that we left him in good company, and surely such a fact ought to allay all apprehensions on his behalf.

Months have rolled over—the London season has passed—Parliament has but a few days to run—the wearied speakers are longing to loiter along green lanes, or be touring or water-curing it in Germany—cities are all but deserted, and town-houses have that dusty, ill-cared-for air that reminds one of an estate in Chancery, or a half-pay lieutenant. Why is it, then, that Mr. Dunn's residence in Merrion-square wears a look of unusual trimness? Fresh paint—that hypocrisy of architecture—has done its utmost; the hall door is a marvel of mock oak, as are the columns of spurious marble; the Venetian blinds are of an emerald green, and the plate-glass windows mirror the parched trees in the square, and reflect back the almost equally picturesque jaunting-cars as they drive past; the balcony, too, throughout its whole length, is covered with rich flowers and flowery shrubs. In a word, there is a look of preparation that bespeaks a coming event. What can it be?

Various rumours are afloat as to the reason of these changes, some averring that Mr. Dunn is about to take a high official position, and be raised to a distinguished rank; others opine that he is about to retire from the cares of a business life, and marry. What may he not be? Whom may he not aspire to?

Surely the world has gone well with this man. What a great general is to an army in the field—what a great leader to a party in the “House,” was he to every industrial enterprise. His name was a guarantee for all that was accurate in discipline and perfect in organisation. The Board over which he presided as Chairman was sure to meet with regularity and act with energy. The officials who served under him, even to the very humblest, seemed to typify the wise principles by which he had himself been guided in life. They appeared as though imbued with the same patient industry, the same untiring application, the same grave demeanour marked them. “I served under Mr. Davenport Dunn.” “Mr. Dunn knows me.” “Mr. Dunn will speak for me,” were characters that had the force of a diploma, since they vouched not alone for capacity, but for conduct.

It is a very high eminence to attain when a man's integrity and ability throw such a light about him that they illumine not alone the path he treads in life, but shine brightly on those who follow his track, making an atmosphere in which all around participate. To this height had Dunn arrived, and he stood the confessed representative of those virtues Englishmen like to honour, and that character they boast to believe national—the man of successful industry. The fewer the adventitious advantages he derived from fortune, the greater and more worthy did he appear. He was no aristocrat, propped and bolstered by grand relatives. He had no Most Noble or Right Honourable connexions to push him. He was not even gifted with those qualities that win popular favour—he had none of those graces of easy cordiality that others possess—he was not insinuating in address, nor ready of speech. They who described him called him an awkward, bashful man, always struggling against his own ignorance of society, and only sustained by a proud consciousness that whispered the “sterling stuff that was inside”—qualities which appeal to large audiences, and are intelligible to the many. Ay, there was indeed his grand secret. Genius wounds deeply, talent and ability offend widely, but the man of mere commonplace faculties, using common gifts with common opportunities, trading rather upon negative than positive properties, succeeding because he is not this, that, and t'other, plodding along the causeway of life steadily and unobtrusively, seen by all, watched and noticed in every successive stage of his upward progress, so that each may say, “I remember him a barefooted boy, running errands in the street—a poor clerk at forty pounds a year—I knew him when he lived

in such an alley, up so many pair of stairs!" Strange enough, the world likes all this; there is a smack of self-gratulation in it that seems to say, "If I liked it, I could have done as well as he." Success in life won, these men rise into another atmosphere, and acquire another appreciation. They are then used to point the moral of that pleasant fallacy we are all so fond of repeating to each other, when we assert, amongst the blessings of our glorious Constitution, that there is no dignity too great, no station too high for the Englishman who combines industry and integrity with zeal and perseverance. Shame on us, that we dare to call Fallacy that which great Lord Chancellors and Chief Justices have verified from their own confessions; nay, we have even heard a Lord Mayor declare that he was, once upon a time, like that "poor" publican! The moral of it all is, that with regard to the Davenport Dunns of this world, we pity them in their first struggles, we are proud of them in their last successes, and we are about as much right in the one sentiment as in the other.

The world—the great wide world of man—is marvellously identical with the small ingredient of humanity of whose aggregate it consists. It has its moods of generosity, distrust, liberality, narrowness, candour, and suspicion—its fevers of noble impulse, and its cold fits of petty meanness—its high moments of self-devotion, and its dark hours of persecution and hate. Men are judged differently in different ages, just as in every-day life we hear a different opinion from the same individual, when crossed by the cares of the morning and seated in all the voluptuous repose of an after-dinner *abandonnement*.

Now it chanced that Mr. Dunn's lot in life had thrown him into a fortunate conjuncture of the world's temper. The prosperity of a long peace had impressed us with an exaggerated estimate of all the arts that amass wealth—riches became less the reward than the test of ability—success and merit had grown to be convertible terms—clever speakers and eloquent writers assured us that wars pertained only to ages of barbarism—that a higher civilisation would repudiate them—that men, now bent upon a high and noble philanthropy, would alone strive to diffuse the benefits of abundance and refinement amongst their fellows, and that we were about to witness an elysian age of plenty, order, and happiness. The same men who stigmatised the glory of war as the hypocrisy of carnage, invented another hypocrisy infinitely meaner and more ignoble, and placed upon the high altars of our worship the golden image of Gain.

As the incarnation of this passion Davenport Dunn stood out before the world; nor was there a tribute of its flattery that was not laid at his feet. Even they who had neither wish nor necessity to benefit by his peculiar influence did not withhold their homage, but joined in the general acclamation that pronounced him the great man of our time; and at his Sunday dinners were met the most distinguished in rank—all that the country boasted of, great in station, illustrious by services or capacity. His splendid house in Piccadilly—rented for the season for a fabulous sum—was beset all the morning by visitors, somewhat unlike, it must be owned, the class who frequented his Dublin levees. Here they were not Deputations or Bank Directors, Railway Chairmen or Drainage Commissioners, they were all that Fashion claims as her own—proud Duchesses of princely fortune, great Countesses high in courtly favour, noble ladies whose smile of recognition was a firman to the highest places. They met there, by one of those curious compacts the grand world occasionally makes with itself, to do something, in a sort of half imitation of that inferior race of mortals who live and marry, and die in the spheres beneath them. In fact, Dunn's house was a sort of Bourse, where shares were trafficked in, and securities bought and sold, with an eagerness none the less that the fingers that held them wore gloves fastened with rubies and emeralds.

In those gorgeous drawing-rooms, filled with objects of high art, statues stolen from the Vatican, gems obtained by Heaven knows what stratagems from Italian or Spanish convents, none deigned to notice by even a passing look the treasures that surrounded them. In vain the heavenly beauty of Raphael beamed from the walls—in vain the seductive glances of Greuze in all their languishing voluptuousness—in vain the haughty nobility of Van Dyck claimed the homage of a passing look. All were eagerly bent upon lists of stocks and shares, and no words were heard save such as told of rise or fall—the alternations of that chance which makes or mars humanity.

It was while in the midst of that distinguished company Mr. Dunn received the telegram we have mentioned in our last chapter as despatched by Mr. Hanks. His was a nature long inured to the ups-and-downs of fortune; his great self-teaching had been principally directed to the very point of how best to meet emergencies, and yet, as he read over these brief lines, for a moment his courage seemed to have deserted him.

“Chimbarago Artesian Well and Water Company,” lisped out

a very pale, sickly-looking Countess. "Shares are rising, Mr. Dunn; may I venture upon them?"

"Here's the Marquesas Harbour of Refuge scheme going to smash, Dunn!" whispered an old gentleman, with a double-eye-glass, his hand trembling as it held the share-list. "Eh, what do you say to that?"

"Glengariff's going steadily up—steadily up," muttered Lord Glengariff in Dunn's ear. Then, struck by the sudden pallor of his face, he added, "Are you ill—are you faint?"

"A mere nothing," said Dunn, carelessly. "By the way, what hour is it? Near one, and I have an appointment with the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Yes, Lady Massingberd, perfectly safe; not a splendid investment, but quite sure. Cagliari Cobalts are first-rate, Sir George; take all you can get of them. The Dalmatian line is guaranteed by the Austrian Government, my Lord. I saw the Ambassador yesterday. Pray excuse a hasty leave-taking."

His carriage was quickly ordered, but before he set out he despatched a short telegraphic message to Hanks. It ran thus: "Detain her; suffer no letters from her to reach the post." This being duly sent off, he drove to Downing-street. That dingy old temple of intrigue was well known to him. His familiar steps had mounted that gloomy old stair some scores of times, but now for the first, the very first time in his life, instead of being at once ushered into the presence of the Minister, he was asked to "wait for a few moments." What a shock did the intimation give him! Was the news already abroad—had the fell tidings escaped? A second's consideration showed this was impossible, and yet what meant this reserve?

"Is the Council sitting, Mr. Bagwell?" asked he, of a very well-dressed young gentleman, with a glass fixed in his eye, who acted as Private Secretary to the Minister.

"No; they're chatting, I fancy," lisped out the other. "The Council was up half an hour ago."

"Have you mentioned my name, Sir?" asked Dunn, with a formidable emphasis on the pronoun.

"Yes," said he, arranging his hair before the glass; "I sent in your card."

"Well, and the answer?"

"There was no answer, which, I take it, means 'wait,'" replied he, in the same light and graceful tone of voice.

Dunn took his hat hastily from the table, and with a stern

stare, intended to mean, I shall remember your face again, said,

"You may inform Lord Jedburg that I came by appointment; that I was here punctually at one o'clock; that I waited full fifteen minutes; that——"

What more Mr. Dunn was about to say was cut short by the opening of a door, and the issuing forth of some five or six gentlemen, all laughing and talking together.

"How d'ye do, Mr. Dunn?" "How d'ye do, Dunn?" "How are you, Dunn?" said some three or four, familiarly, as they passed through the room. And ere he could acknowledge the salutations, Lord Jedburg himself appeared at the door, and made a sign for him to enter. Never before had Davenport Dunn crossed those precincts with so nervous a heart. If his reason assured him that there was no cause for fear, his instincts and his conscience spoke a different language. He bent one quick penetrating glance on the Minister ere he sat down, as though to read there what he might of the future, but there was nothing to awaken anxiety or distrust in that face. His Lordship was far advanced in life, his hair more white than grey, his brow wrinkled and deep-furrowed, and yet if, instead of the cares of a mighty empire his concern had been the passing events of a life of society and country habits, nothing could have more suited the easy expression, the graceful smile, and the pleasant *bonhomie* of that countenance. Resuming the cigar he had been smoking as Dunn came in, he lounged back indolently in his deep chair, and said,

"What can I do for you at the Isle of Wight, Dunn? I fancy we shall have a trip to Osborne to-morrow morning."

"Indeed, my Lord?" asked he, anxiously; "are you going out?"

"So they say," replied the other, carelessly. "Do you smoke? You'll find those Cubans very mild. So they say, Dunn. Monksley assures us that we shall be in a minority to-night of fifteen or sixteen. Drake thinks five-and-twenty."

"From your Lordship's easy mode of taking it, I conclude that there is either a remedy for the disaster, or that——"

"It is no disaster at all," chimed in his Lordship, gaily. "Well, the Carlton Club are evidently of that mind, and some of the evening papers too."

"I perceive, my Lord," said Dunn, with a peculiar smile, "the misfortune is not irremediable."

"You are right, Dunn," said the other, promptly. "We

have decided to accept a defeat, which, as our adversaries have never anticipated, will find them perfectly unprepared how to profit by it. They will beat us, but, when called upon to form a Government, will be utterly unable. The rest is easy enough: a new Parliament, and ourselves stronger than ever."

"A very clever countryman of mine once told me, my Lord, that he made a ruinous coach line turn out a most lucrative speculation by simply running an opposition and breaking it; so true are the world in their attachment to success."

A hearty laugh from the minister acknowledged the parallel, and he added, carelessly,

"Sir George Bosely has a story of a fellow who once established a run on his own bank just to get up his credit. A hit above even *you*, Master Dunn—eh?"

If Dunn laughed, it was with a face of deepest crimson, though he saw the while his secret was safe. Indeed, the honest frankness of his Lordship's laugh guaranteed that all was well.

"The fellow ought to have been a Cabinet Minister, Dunn. He had the true governing element in him, which is a strong sense of human gullibility."

"A little more is needed, my Lord; how to turn that same tendency to profit."

"Of course—of course. By the way, Dunn, though not *à propos*," said he, laughingly, "what of the great Glengariff scheme? Is it prospering?"

"The shares stand at one hundred and seventy-seven and an eighth, my Lord," said Dunn, calmly. "I can only wish your Lordship's party as favourable a fortune."

"Well, we are rather below par just now," said the Minister, laughing, while he busied himself to select another cigar from the heap before him.

"It was just about that very enterprise I came to speak to your Lordship this morning," said Dunn, drawing his chair closer. "I need not tell you how far the assurance of Government support has aided our success. The report of the Parliamentary Committee as to the Harbour of Refuge—the almost certain promise of her Majesty's marine residence—the flattering reception your Lordship gave to the deputation in the matter of the American Packet-station, have all done us good and efficient service. But we want more, my Lord—we want more!"

"The deuce you do! Why, my good friend, these marks of

our preference for your scheme have cost us some hundred angry addresses and recriminations from all parts of the kingdom, where, we are told, there is more picturesque scenery, more salubrious air, deeper water, and better anchorage. If you build a villa for every member of the Cabinet, and settled it on us in freehold there, it would not repay us for all we have suffered in your cause."

"We should be both proud and happy to accommodate your Lordship's colleagues on Jedburg-crescent," said Dunn, bowing with a well-assumed seriousness.

"But what do you want us to do?" said his Lordship, peevishly, for he had the dislike great men generally feel to have their joke capped. It is for them to be smart, if they please, but not for the Mr. Davenport Dunns of this world to take up the clue of the facetiousness.

Mr. Dunn seemed somewhat posed by the abrupt directness of this question. Lord Jedburg went on:

"You surely never supposed that we could send you material assistance. You are far too conversant with the working of our institutions to expect such. These things are possible in France, but they won't do here. No, Dunn; perfectly impossible here."

"And yet, my Lord, it is precisely in France that they ought to be impossible. Ministers in that country have no responsibility except towards their sovereign. If they become suddenly enriched, one sees at once how they have abused the confidence of their master."

"I'll not enter upon that question," said his Lordship, smartly. "Tell me, rather, something about Ireland; how shall we fare there in a general election?"

"With proper exertions you may be able to hold your own," was the dry rejoinder.

"Not more? Not any more than this?"

"Certainly not, my Lord, nor do I see how you could expect it. What you are in the habit of calling concessions to Irish interests have been little other than apologies for the blunders of your colleagues. You remove some burden imposed by yourselves, or express sorrow for some piece of legislation your own hands have inflicted——"

"Come, come, Mr. Dunn, the only course of lectures I attend are delivered in the House of Commons; besides I have no time for these things." There was a tone of prompt decision in the way he uttered this that satisfied Dunn he had gone fully as far

as was safe. "Now as to Ireland, we shall look for at least sixty, or perhaps venty, sure votes. Come, where's your list, Dunn? ou, with it, man! we are rather rich in patronage just now. We can make a Bishop, a Puisne Judge, three Assistant Barristers, a Poor Law Commissioner, not to say that there are some fifty smaller things in the Revenue. Which will you have?"

"All, my Lord," said Dunn, coolly—"all, and some colonial appointments besides, for such of our friends as find living at home inexpedient."

His Lordship lay back in his chair, and laughed pleasantly. "There's Jamaica just vacant; would that suit you?"

"The Governorship? The very thing I want, and for a very old supporter of your Lordship's party."

"Who is he?"

"The Earl of Glengariff, my Lord, a nobleman who has never received the slightest acknowledgment for a political adherence of fifty odd years."

"Why, the man must be in second childhood. If I remember aright, he was——"

"He is exactly four years your Lordship's senior; he says you fagged for him his last half at Eton."

"Pooh, pooh! he mistakes; it was of my father he was thinking. But to the point: what can he do for us?"

"I was alluding to what he had done, my Lord," said Dunn, pointedly.

"Ah, Dunn, we are not rich enough for gratitude. That is the last luxury of a "millionnaire;" besides, you are aware how many claimants there will be for so good a thing as this."

"Which of them all, my Lord, can promise you ten votes in the Houses?"

"Well is the bargain finished? Is all paid?"

"Not yet, my Lord; not yet. You are averse to affording us any support to the Glengariff scheme, and, for the present, I will not hamper you with the consideration; you can, however, serve us in another way. Glumthal is very anxious about the Jew Bill; he wishes, Heaven knows why, to see his brother in the House. May I promise him that the next session will see it law? Let me just have your Lordship's word to that effect, so that I may telegraph to him when I leave this."

His Lordship shook his head dubiously, and said, "You forget that I have colleagues, Dunn."

"I remember it well, my Lord, and I only asked for your

own individual pledge. The fact is, my Lord, ~~the~~ Jews throughout the world have attached an immense importance to this question, and if Glumthal—confidentially, of course—be made the depository of the secret, it will raise him vastly in the estimation of his co-religionists.”

“Let us see if the thing can be done. Is it practicable, and how?”

“Oh, as to that, my Lord, modern legislation is carried on pretty much like a mercantile concern; you advertise your want, and it is supplied at once. Ask the newspapers, ‘How are we to admit the Jews?’ and you’ll get your answer as regularly as though it were a question of sport addressed to *Bell’s Life*.”

“Candour being the order of the day, what does Mr. Davenport Dunn want for himself?”

“I am coming to him, my Lord, but not just yet.”

“Why, really, Dunn, except that we turn Colonel Blood in your behalf, and steal the crown for you, I don’t see what more we can do.”

“It is a mere trifle in point of patronage, my Lord, though, in my ignorance of such matters, it may be possibly not without difficulty.” said Dunn; and for the first time his manner betrayed a sign of embarrassment. “The Earl of Glengariff has an only unmarried daughter, a lady of great personal attractions, and remarkably gifted in point of ability; one of those persons, in short, on whom Nature has set the stamp of high birth, and fitted to be the ornament of a Court.”

“But we are all married in the Cabinet. Even the Treasury Lords have got wives,” said Lord Jedburg, laughing, and enjoying the discomfiture of Dunn’s face even more than his own jest.

“I am aware of it, my Lord,” replied Dunn, with inflexible gravity; “my ambitious hopes did not aspire so highly. What I was about to entreat was your Lordship’s assistance to have the lady I have mentioned appointed to a situation in the household—one of her Majesty’s Ladies——”

“Impossible! perfectly impossible, Dunn!” said the Minister, flinging away his cigar in impatient anger; “really, you seem to have neither measure nor moderation in your demands. Such an interference on my part, if I were mad enough to attempt it, would meet a prompt rebuke.”

“If your Lordship’s patience had permitted me to finish, you would have heard that what I proposed was nothing beyond the

barren honour of a *Gazette*. On the day week that her Ladyship's name had so appeared she would be married."

"It does not alter the matter in the least. It is not in my province to make such a recommendation, and I refuse it flatly."

"I am sorry for it, my Lord. Your Lordship's refusal may inflict great evils upon the country—the rule of an incompetent and ungenial Government—the accession to power of men the most unscrupulous and reckless."

"Cannot you see, Sir," said the Minister, sharply, "that I am in a position to comprehend what my office admits of, and where its limits are laid? I have told you that these appointments are not in our hands."

"Sir Robert Peel did not say so, my Lord; he insisted—actually insisted—on his right to surround the throne with political partisans."

"The Cabinet is not an Equity Court, to be ruled by precedents; and I tell you once more, Dunn, I should fail if I attempted it."

"The Viscountess might obtain this favour," said Dunn, with an obdurate persistence that was not to be resisted; "and even if unsuccessful, it would inflict no rebuff on your Lordship. Indeed, it would come more gracefully as a proposition from her Ladyship, who could also mention Lady Augusta's approaching marriage."

"I almost think I might leave you to finish the discussion with my wife," said his Lordship, laughing; "I half suspect it would be the best penalty on your temerity. Are you engaged for Sunday?—well, then, dine with us. And now, that bill being adjourned," said he, with a weary sigh, "what next?"

"I am now coming to myself—to my own case, my Lord," said Dunn, with the very slightest tremor in his voice. "Need I say that I wish it were in the hands of any other advocacy? I am so far fortunate, however, that I address one fully conversant with my claims on his party. For five-and-twenty years I have been the careful guardian of their interests in a country where, except in mere name, they never possessed any real popularity. Your Lordship smiles a dissent—may I enter upon the question?"

"Heaven forbid!" broke in the Minister, smiling good-humouredly.

"Well, my Lord, were I to reduce my services to a mere monetary estimate, and furnish you with a bill of costs, for what a goodly sum should I stand in the estimates. I have mainly

sustained the charge of seven county elections, hardly contested. I have paid the entire charges on twenty-two borough contests. I have subsidised the provincial press in your favour at a cost of several thousand pounds out of my own pocket. I have compromised three grave actions about to be brought against the Government. Of the vast sums I have contributed to local charities, schools, nunneries, societies of various denominations, all in the interest of your party, I take no account. I have spent in these and like objects a princely fortune, and yet these hundreds of thousands of pounds are as nothing—mere nothing to the actual personal services I have rendered to your party. In the great revolution effected by the sale of encumbered estates, I have so watchfully guarded your interests that I have replaced the old rampant Toryism of the land by a gentry at once manageable and practicable—men intent less upon party than personal objects, consequently available to the Minister, always accessible by an offer of direct advantage. I have, with all this, so thrown a Whig light over the rising prosperity of the country, that it might seem the result of your wise rule that stimulated men to the higher civilisation they have attained to, and that a more forbearing charity and a more liberal spirit went hand in hand with improved agriculture and higher farming. To identify a party with the great march of this prosperity—to make of your policy a cause of these noble results, was the grand conception which, for a quarter of a century, I have carried out. When Mr. O'Connell kept your predecessors in power, his price was the bit-by-bit surrender of what in your hearts you believed to be bulwarks of the constitution. In return for my support what have I got? Some patronage—be it so—for my own dependents and followers, no doubt! Show me one man of my name, one man of my convictions, holding place under the Crown. No, my Lord, my power to serve your party was based on this sure foundation, that I was open to no imputation; I was the distributor of your patronage to the men best worthy to receive it—no more."

"Four o'clock, Dunn; time's up," said his Lordship. "I must go down to the House."

"I am sorry to have detained your Lordship with so ungracious a theme."

"Well, I do think you might have spared me some of it. I know well my colleagues all know your invaluable services—an admirable member of the party, active and able, but not quite neglected either, eh, Dunn?—not entirely left in oblivion?"

While he spoke, he busied himself in the search for a paper amidst the heap of those before him, and could not therefore notice the mortification so palpably expressed on Dunn's face.

"I can't find it," muttered he; "I should like, however, to show you the memorandum itself, in which your name stands recommended to her Majesty for a baronetcy."

Dunn's sudden start made the speaker look up, and as he turned his eyes on him there was no mistaking the look of determined anger on his features.

"A baronetcy, my Lord," said he, with a slow, thick utterance, "has become the recognised reward of a popular writer, or a fashionable physician, whose wives acquire a sort of Brummagem rank in calling themselves 'My Lady;' but men like myself—men who have sustained a party—men who, wielding many arms of strength, have devoted them all to the one task of maintaining in power a certain administration, which, whatever their gifts, assuredly did not possess the art of conciliating——"

"Come, it is a Peerage you want?" broke in his Lordship, whose manner betrayed a temper pushed to its last limits.

"If I am to trust your Lordship's tone, the pretension would seem scarcely credible," said Dunn, calmly.

"I believe I can understand how it would appear to others. I can, without great difficulty, imagine the light in which it would be viewed."

"As to that, my Lord, any advancement to a man like me will evoke plenty of animadversion. I have done too much for your party not to have made many enemies. The same objection would apply were I to accept the paltry acknowledgment you so graciously contemplated for me, and which I warn you not to offer me."

Was it the naked insolence of this speech, or was it that in uttering it the proud pretension of the man summoned a degree of dignity to his manner, but certainly the Minister now looked at him with a sort of respect he had not deigned hitherto to bestow.

"You know well, Dunn," he began, in a tone of conciliation, "that fitness for the elevation is only one of the requirements in such a case. There are a mass of other considerations—the ostensible claims—I mean such as can be avowed and declared openly—of the pretending party—the services he has rendered to the country at large—the merits he can show for some great public recognition. The Press, whatever be its faults now—a days, has no defects on the score of frankness, and we shall

have the question put in twenty different quarters—‘What brilliant campaign has Mr. Dunn concluded?’ ‘What difficult negotiation carried to successful issue?’ ‘Where have been his great achievements in the law courts?’ To be sure, it might be said that we honour the industrial spirit of our country in ennobling one who has acquired a colossal fortune by his own unaided abilities, but Manchester and Birmingham have also their ‘millionnaires.’”

“Your Lordship’s time is far too valuable to be passed in such discussion—even mine might be more profitably spent than in listening to it. My demand is now before you; in some three weeks hence it is not impossible it may await the consideration of your Lordship’s successors. In one word, if I leave this room without your distinct pledge on the subject, you will no longer reckon me amongst the followers of your party.”

“Half-past four, I protest,” said Lord Jedburg, taking up his gloves. “I shall be too late at the House. Let us conclude this to-morrow morning. Come down here at eleven.”

“Excuse me, my Lord. I leave town to-night. I am going over to Ireland.”

“Yes, you ought to be there—I forgot. Well, you must leave this affair in my hands. I’ll speak to Croydon and Locksley about it—both staunch friends of yours. I can make no pledge, you know—no actual promise——”

“Nor I either, my Lord,” said Dunn, rising. “Let me, however, ask you to accept of my excuses for Sunday at dinner.”

“I regret much that we are not to have the pleasure of your company,” said his Lordship, with a formal courtesy.

“These appointments,” said Dunn, laying down a list he had made on the table, “are, of course, in your Lordship’s hands.”

“I conclude so,” was the dry reply, as the Minister buttoned his coat.

“I wish your Lordship a very good morning. Good-by, my Lord.” And the words had their peculiar utterance.

“Good-by, Mr. Dunn,” said the Minister, shortly, and rang for his carriage.

Dunn had but reached the foot of the stairs, when he heard a rapid tread behind him. “I beg pardon, Mr. Dunn,” cried Bagwell, the private secretary; “his Lordship sent me to overtake you, and say, that the matter you are desirous about shall be done. His Lordship also hopes you can dine with him on Sunday.”

"Oh, very well; say, 'Yes, with much pleasure.' Has his Lordship gone?"

"Yes, by the private door. He was in a great hurry, and will, I fear, be late after all."

"There's a good thing to be done, just now, in potash, Bagwell, at Pesaro. If you have a spare hundred or two, give me a call to-morrow morning." And with a gesture to imply secrecy, Dunn moved away, leaving Bagwell in a dream of gold-getting.

CHAPTER LXXXII.

THE COTTAGE NEAR SNOWDON.

AT an early portion of this true story, our reader was incidentally told that Charles Conway had a mother, and that she lived in Wales. Her home was a little cottage near the village of Bedgellert, a neighbourhood wherein her ancestors had once possessed large estates, but of which not an acre now acknowledged her as owner. Here, on a mere pittance, she had lived for years a life of unbroken solitude. The few charities to the poor her humble means permitted had served to make her loved and respected, while her gentle manners and kind address gave her that sort of eminence which such qualities are sure to attain in remote and simple circles.

All her thoughts in life, all her wishes and ambitions, were centered in her son, and although it was to the wild and reckless extravagance of his early life that she owed the penury which now pressed her—although but for his wasteful excesses she had still been in affluence and comfort, she never attached to him the slightest blame, nor did her lips ever utter one syllable of reproach. Strong in the conviction that so long as the wild excesses of youth stamp nothing of dishonour on the character, the true nature within has sustained no permanent injury, she waited patiently for the time when, this season of self-indulgence over, the higher dictates of manly reason would assert their influence, and that Charley, having sown his wild oats, would come forth rather chastened and sobered than stained by his intercourse with the world.

If this theory of hers has its advocates, there are many—and wise people, too—who condemn it, and who deem those alone safe who have been carefully guarded from the way of tempta-

tion, and have been kept estranged from the seductions of pleasure. To ourselves the whole question resolves itself into the nature of the individual, at the same time that we had far rather repose our confidence in one who had borne his share in life's passages, gaining his experience, mayhap, with cost, but coming honourably through the trial, than on him who, standing apart, had but looked out over the troubled ocean of human passion, nor risked himself on the sea of man's temptations.

The former was Conway's case: he had led a life of boundless extravagance; without any thought of the cost, he had launched out into every expensive pursuit. What we often hear applied to others figuratively, was strictly applicable to him; he never knew the value of money; he never knew that anything one desired could be overpaid for. The end came at last. With a yacht ready stored and fitted out for a Mediterranean cruise, with three horses heavily engaged at Doncaster, with a shooting lodge filled with distinguished company in the Highlands, with negotiations all but completed for the Hooksley hounds, with speculations ripe as to whether the Duchess of This, or the Countess of That had secured him for a daughter or a niece, there came one morning the startling information from his solicitor that a large loan he had contemplated raising was rendered impossible by some casualty of the money-market. Recourse must be had to the Jews—heavy liabilities incurred at Newmarket must be met at once and at any cost. A week of disaster fell exactly at this conjuncture; he lost largely at the Portland, largely on the Turf; a brother officer, for whom he had given surety, levanted immensely in debt, while a local bank, in which a considerable sum of his was vested, failed. The men of sixty per cent. saved him from shipwreck, but they took the craft for the salvage, and Conway was ruined.

Amidst the papers which Conway had sent to his solicitor as securities for the loan, a number of family documents had got mingled, old deeds and titles to estates of which the young man had not so much as heard, claims against property of whose existence he knew nothing. When questioned about them by the man of law, he referred him coolly to his mother, saying frankly "it was a matter on which he had never troubled his head." Mrs. Conway herself scarcely knew more. She had heard that there was a claim in the family to a Peerage; her husband used to allude to it in his own dreamy, indolent fashion and say that it ought to be looked after, and that was all.

Had the information come to the mind of an active or enter-

prising man of business it might have fared differently. The solicitor to the family was, however, himself a lethargic, lazy sort of person, and he sent back the papers to Mrs. Conway, stating that he was not sure "something might not be made of them;" that is, added he, "if he had five or six thousand pounds to expend upon searches, and knew where to prosecute them."

This was but sorry comfort, but it did not fall upon a heart high in hope or strong in expectation. Mrs. Conway had never lent herself to the impression that the claim had much foundation, and she heard the tidings with calm, and all that was remembered of the whole transaction was when some jocular allusion would be made by Charles to the time when he should succeed to his Peerage, or some as lighthearted jest of the old lady as to whether she herself was to enjoy a title or not. The more stirring incidents of a great campaign had latterly, however, so absorbed all the young soldier's interest, that he seemed totally to have forgotten the oft-recurring subject of joke between them. Strange enough was it, yet that in the very letter which conveyed to his mother an account of his Tchernaya achievement, a brief postscript had the following words:

"Since I have been confined to hospital, a person connected with the newspapers, I believe, has been here to learn the exact story of my adventure, and, curiously enough, has been pumping me about our family history. Can it be that "our Peerage" is looking up again? This last sabre-cut on my skull makes me rather anxious to exchange a chako for a coronet. Can you send me anything hopeful in this direction?"

It was on an answer to this letter the old lady was occupied, seated at an open window, as the sun was just setting on a calm and mellow evening in late autumn. Well understanding the temperament of him she addressed, she adverted little to the danger of his late achievement, and simply seemed to concur in his own remark when recounting it, that he who has made his name notorious from folly, has, more than others, the obligation to achieve a higher and better reputation; and added, at the same time, "Charley, what I liked best in your feat was its patriotism. The sense of rendering a good and efficient service to the cause of your country was a nobler prompting than any desire for personal distinction." From this she turned to tell him about what she well knew he loved best to hear of—her home and her daily life, with its little round of uneventful cares, the

little Welsh pony "Crw," and his old spaniel "Belle," and the tulips he had taken such pains about, and the well he had sunk in the native rock. She had good tidings, too, that the railroad—the dreadful railroad—was not to take the line of their happy valley, but to go off in some more "favoured" direction. Of the cottage itself she had succeeded in obtaining a renewed lease—a piece of news well calculated to delight him, "if," as she said, "grand dreams of the Peerage might not have impaired his relish for the small hut at the foot of Snowdon." She had just reached so far when a little chaise, drawn by a mountain pony, drew up before the door, and a lady in a sort of half mourning dress got out and rang the bell. As the old lady rose to admit her visitor—for her only servant was at work in the garden—she felt no small astonishment. She was known to none but the peasant neighbourhood about her; she had not a single acquaintance in the country with its gentry; and although the present arrival came with little display, in her one glance at the figure of the stranger she saw her to be distinctly of a certain condition in life.

It will conduce equally to brevity and to the interests of our story if we give what followed in the words wherein Mrs. Conway conveyed it to her son:

"Little, I thought, my dear Charley, that I should have to cross this already long letter—little suspected that its real and only interest was to have been suggested as I drew to its close; and here, if I had the heart for it, were the place to scold you for a pretty piece of mystification you once practised upon me, when you induced me to offer the hospitality of this poor cottage to an humble gentlewoman, whose poverty would not deem even *my* life an existence of privation—the sister of a fellow-soldier you called her, and made me to believe—whose the fault I am not sure—that she was some not very young or very attractive person, but one whose claim lay in her frindless lot and forlorn condition. Say what you will, such was my impression, and it could have had no other source than your description. Yes, Charley, my mind-picture was of a thin-faced, somewhat sandy-haired lady, of some six or eight-and-thirty years, bony, angular, and awkward, greatly depressed, and naturally averse to intercourse with those who had not known her or her better fortunes; shall I add, that I assisted my portrait by adding coarse hands, and filled up my anticipation by suspecting a very decided Irish brogue. Of course this flattering outline could not have been revealed in a vision and,

must have come from your hands, deny it whenever and however you may! And now for the reality—the very prettiest girl I ever saw, since I left off seeing pretty people, when I was young and had pretensions myself: even then I do not remember any one handsomer, and with a winning grace of manner equal, if not superior, to her beauty. You know me as a very difficult critic on the subject of breeding and *maintien*. I feel that I am so, even to injustice, because I look for the reserved courtesy of one era as well as the easy frankness of another. *She* has both; and she is a Court lady who could adorn a cottage. Of my own atrocious sketch there was nothing about her. Stay, there was. She had the Irish accent, but by some witchery of her own I got to like it—fancied it was musical and breathed of the sweet South; but if I go on with her perfections, I shall never come to the important question, for which you care more to hear besides, as to how I know all these things. And now, to my horror, I find how little space is left me to tell you. Well, in three words you shall have it. She has been here to see me on her way somewhere, her visit being prompted by the wish to place in my hands some very curious and very old family records, found by a singular accident in an Irish country-house. They relate to the claim of some ancestor of yours to certain lands in Ireland, and the right is asserted in the name of Baron Conway, and afterwards the Lord Viscount Lackington. I saw no further; indeed, except that they all relate to our dear Peerage, they seem to possess no very peculiar interest. If it were not that she would introduce your name, push me with interminable questions as to what it was you had really done, what rewards you had or were about to reap, where you were, and, above all, how? I should have called her visit the most disinterested piece of kindness I ever heard of. Still she showed a sincere and ardent desire to serve us, and said that she would be ready to make any delay in London to communicate with our lawyer, and acquaint him fully with the circumstances of this discovery.

“I unceasingly entreated her to be my guest, were it only for a few days. I even affected to believe that I would send for our lawyer to come down and learn the curious details of the finding of the papers; but she pleaded the absolute necessity of her presence in London so strongly—she betrayed, besides, something like a deep anxiety for some coming event—that I was obliged to abandon my attempt, and limit our acquaintance by the short two hours we had passed together.

"It will take some time, and another long letter, to tell you of the many things we talked over; for, our first greeting over, we felt towards each other like old friends. At last she arose to leave me, and never since the evening you bade me good-by did the same loneliness steal over my heart as when I saw her little carriage drive away from the door.

"One distressing recollection alone clouds the memory of our meeting: I suffered her to leave me without a promise to return. I could not, without infringing delicacy, have pressed her more to tell me of herself and her plans for the future, and yet even now I regret that, at any hazard, I did not risk the issue. The only pledge I could obtain was, that she would write to me. I am now at the end of my paper, but not of my theme, of which you shall hear more in my next. Meanwhile, if you are not in love with her, I am.

"Your affectionate mother,

"MARIAN CONWAY."

We have ourselves nothing to add to the narrative of this letter, save the remark that Mrs. Conway felt far more deeply than she expressed the disappointment of not being admitted to Sybella's full confidence. The graceful captivation of the young girl's manner, heightened in interest by her friendless and lone condition—the perilous path in life that must be trodden by one so beautiful and unprotected—had made a deep impression on the old lady's heart, and she was sincere in self-reproach that she had suffered her to leave her.

She tried again and again, by recalling all that passed between them, to catch some clue to what Sybella's future pointed; but so guardedly had the young girl shrouded every detail of her own destiny, that the effort was in vain. Sybella had given an address in town, where Mrs. Conway's lawyer might meet her if necessary, and with a last hope the old lady had written a note to her to that place, entreating, as the greatest favour, that she would come down and pass some days with her at the cottage; but her letter came back to her own hands. Miss Kellett was gone.

CHAPTER LXXXIII.

A SUPPER.

IN long-measured sweep the waves flowed smoothly in upon the low shore at Baldoyle of a rich evening in autumn, as a very old man tottered feebly down to the strand and seated himself on a rock. Leaning his crossed arms on his stout stick, he gazed steadily and calmly on the broad expanse before him. Was it that they mirrored to him the wider expanse of that world to which he was so rapidly tending? was it in that measured beat he recognised the march of time, the long flow of years he could count, and which still swept on, smooth but relentless? or was it that the unbroken surface soothed by its very sameness a brain long wearied by its world conflict? Whatever the cause, old Matthew Dunn came here every evening of his life, and, seated on the self-same spot, gazed wistfully over the sea before him.

Although his hair was snow-white, and the wrinkles that furrowed his cheeks betrayed great age, his eyes yet preserved a singular brightness, and in their vivid glances showed that the strong spirit that reigned within was still unquenched. The look of defiance they wore was the very essence of the man—one who accepted any challenge that fortune flung him, and, whether victor or vanquished, only prepared for fresh conflict.

There was none of the weariness so often observable in advanced age about his features, nothing of that expression that seems to crave rest and peace, still as little was there anything of that irritable activity which seems at times to counterfeit past energy of temperament; no, he was calm, stern, and self-possessed, the man who had fought his way from boyhood, and

who asked neither grace nor favour of fortune as he drew nigh the end of the journey!

"I knew I'd find you here," said a deep voice close to his ear. "How are you?"

The old man looked up, and the next moment his son was in his arms. "Davy, my own boy—Davy, I was just thinking of you; was it Friday or Saturday you said you'd come."

"I thought I could have been here Saturday, father, but Lord Jedburg made a point of my dining with him yesterday; and it was a great occasion—three Cabinet Ministers present, a new Governor-General of India, too—I felt it was better to remain."

"Right, Davy—always right—them's the men to keep company with!"

"And how are you, Sir? are you hale, and stout, and hearty as ever?" said Dunn, as he threw his head back, the better to look at the old man.

"As you see me, boy; a little shaky about the knees, somewhat tardy about getting up of a morning, but once launched, the old craft can keep her timbers together. But tell me the news, lad—tell me the news, and never mind *me*."

"Well, Sir, last week was a very threatening one for us. No money to be had on any terms, discounts all suspended, shares falling everywhere, good houses crashing on all sides, nothing but disasters with every post, but we've worked through it, Sir. Glumthal behaved well, though at the very last minute; and Lord Glengariff, too, deposited all his title-deeds at Hanbridge's for a loan of thirty-six thousand; and then, as Downing-street also stood to us, we weathered the gale, but it was close work, father—so close that at one moment I telegraphed to Liverpool to secure a birth in the *Arctic*."

A sudden start from the old man stopped him, but he quickly resumed: "Don't be alarmed, Sir; my message excited no suspicion, for I sent a fellow to New York by the packet, and now all is clear again, and we have good weather before us."

"The shares fell mighty low in the Allotment, Davy; how was that?"

"Partly from the cause I have mentioned, father, the tightness in the money market; partly that I suspect we had an enemy in the camp, that daughter of Kellett's——"

"Didn't I say so? didn't I warn you about her? didn't I tell you that it was the brood of the serpent that stung us first?" cried out the old man, with a wild energy; "and with all that you would put her there with the Lord and his family, where

she'd know all that was doing, see the letters, and, maybe, write the answers to them! Where was the sense and prudence of that, Davy?"

"She was an enthusiast, father, and I hoped that she'd have been content to revel in that realm, but I was mistaken."

There was a tone of dejection in the way he spoke the last words that made the old man fix his eyes steadfastly on him. "Well, Davy, go on," said he.

"I have no more to say, Sir," said he, in the same sad voice. "The Earl has dismissed her, and she has gone away."

"That's right, that's right—better late than never. Neither luck nor grace could come of Paul Kellett's stock. I hope that's the last we'll hear of them; and now, Davy, how is the great world doing? How is the Queen?"

Dunn could scarcely suppress a smile as he answered this question, asked as it was in real and earnest anxiety; and for some time the old man continued to press him with eager inquiries as to the truth of various newspaper reports about royal marriages and illustrious visitors, of which it was strange how he preserved the recollection.

"You have not asked me about myself, father," said Dunn at last, "and I think *my* fortunes might have had the first place in your interest."

"Sure you told me this minute that you didn't see the Queen," said the old man, peevishly.

"Very true, Sir, I did not, but I saw her Minister. I placed before him the services I had done his party, my long sacrifices of time, labour, and money in their cause; I showed him that I was a man who had established the strongest claim upon the Government."

"And wouldn't be refused—wouldn't be denied, eh, Davy?"

"Just so, Sir. I intimated that also, so far as it was prudent to do so."

"The stronger the better, Davy; weak words show a faint heart. 'Tis knowing the cost of your enmity will make men your friends."

"I believe, Sir, that in such dealings my own tact is my safest guide. It is not to-day or yesterday that I have made acquaintance with men of this order. For upwards of two-and-twenty years I have treated Ministers as my equals."

The old man heard this proud speech with an expression of almost ecstasy on his features, and grasped his son's hand in a delight too great for words.

"Ay, father, I have made our name a cognate number in this

kingdom's arithmetic. Men talk of Davenport Dunn as one recognised in the land."

"'Tis true; 'tis true as the Bible!" muttered the old man.

"And what is more," continued the other, warming with his theme, what I have done I have done for all time. I have laid the foundations deep that the edifice might endure. A man of inferior ambition would have been satisfied with wealth, and the enjoyments it secures; he might have held a seat in Parliament, sat on the benches beside the Minister, mayhap have held some Lordship of This or Under-Secretaryship of That, selling his influence ere it matured, as poor farmers sell their crops standing—but I preferred the patient path. I made a waiting race of it, father, and see what the prize is to be. Your son is to be a Peer of Great Britain!"

The old man's mouth opened wide, and his eyes glared with an almost unnatural brightness, as, catching his son with both arms, he tried to embrace him.

"There, dear father—there!" said Dunn, calmly; "you must not over-excite yourself."

"It's too much, Davy—it's too much; I'll never live to see it."

"That you will, Sir—for a time, indeed, I was half disposed to stipulate that the title should be conferred upon yourself. It would have thus acquired another generation in date, but I remembered how indisposed you might feel to all the worry and care the mere forms of assuming it might cost you. You would not like to leave this old spot, besides——"

"No, on no account," said the old man, pensively.

"And then I thought that your great pride, after all, would be to hear of me, your own Davy, as Lord Castledunn."

"I thought it would be plain Dunn—Lord Dunn," said the old man, quickly.

"If the name admitted of it, I'd have preferred it so."

"And what is there against the name?" asked he, angrily.

"Nothing, father; none have ever presumed to say a word against it. In talking the matter over, however, with some members of the Cabinet, one or two suggested Dunns court, but the majority inclined to Castledunn."

"And what did your Lordship say?" asked the old man, with a gleeful cackle. "Oh, Davy! I never thought the day would come that I'd call you by any name I'd love so well as that you bore when a child; but see, now, it makes my old eyes run over to speak to you as 'my Lord.'"

"It is a fair and honest pride, father," said Dunn, caressingly. "We stormed the breach ourselves, with none to help, none to cheer us on."

"Oh, Davy, but it does me good to call you 'my Lord.'"

"Well, Sir, you are only anticipating a week or two. Parliament will assemble after the elections, and then be prorogued; immediately afterwards there will be four elevations to the Peerage—mine one of them."

"Yes, my Lord," mumbled the old man, submissively.

"But this is not all, father; the same week that sees me gazetted a Peer will announce my marriage with an Earl's daughter."

"Davy, Davy, this luck is coming too quick! Take care, my son, that there's no pit before you."

"I know what I am doing, Sir, and so does the Lady Augusta Arden. You remember the Earl of Glengariff's name?"

"Where you were once a tutor, is it?"

"The same, Sir."

"It was they that used to be so cruel to you, Davy, wasn't it?"

"I was a foolish boy, ignorant of the world and its ways at the time. I fancied fifty things to mean offence which never were intended to wound me."

"Ay, they made you eat in the servants' hall, I think."

"Never, Sir—never; they placed me at a side-table once or twice when pressed for room."

"Well, it was the room you had somewhere in a hayloft, eh?"

"Nothing of the kind, Sir. Your memory is all astray. My chamber was small—for the cottage had not much accommodation—but I was well and suitably lodged."

"Well, what was it they did?" muttered he to himself. "I know it was something that made you cry the whole night after you came home."

"Father, father! these are unprofitable memories," said Dunn, sternly. "Were one to treasure up the score of all the petty slights he may have received in life, so that in some day of power he might acquit the debt, success would be anything but desirable."

"I'm not so sure of that, Davy. I never forgot an injury."

"I am more charitable, Sir," said Dunn, calmly.

"No, you're not, Davy—no, you're not," replied the old man,

eagerly, "but you think it's wiser to be never-minding; and so it would, boy, if the man that injured you was to forget it too. Ay, Davy, that's the rub. But *he* won't; he'll remember to his dying day that there's a score between you."

"I tell you, father, that these maxims do not apply to persons of condition, all whose instincts and modes of thought are unlike those of the inferior classes."

"They are men and women, Davy—they are men and women."

Dunn arose impatiently, observing that the night was growing chilly, and it were better to return to the house.

"I mean to sup with you," said he, gaily, "if you have anything to give me."

"A rasher and eggs, and a bladebone of cold mutton, is all I have," muttered the old man, gloomily. "I would not let them buy a chicken this week, when I saw the shares falling. Give me your arm, Davy, I've a slight weakness in the knees; it always took me at this season since I was a boy." And mumbling how strange it was that one did not throw off childish ailments as one grew older, he crept slowly along towards the house.

As they entered the kitchen, Dunn remarked with astonishment how little there remained of the abundance and plenty which had so characterised it of old. No hams, no flitches hung from the rafters; no sturdy barrels of butter stood against the walls; the chicken-coop was empty; and even to the good fire that graced the hearth there was a change, for a few half-sodden turf-sods were all that lingered in the place. Several baskets and hampers, carefully corded and sealed, were ranged beside the dresser, in which Dunn recognised presents of wine, choice cordials and liqueurs, that he had himself addressed to the old man.

"Why, father, how is this?" asked he, half angrily. "I had hoped for better treatment at your hands. You have apparently not so much as tasted any of the things I sent you."

"There they are, indeed, Davy, just as they came for 'Matthew Dunn, Esq., with care,' written on them, and not a string cut!"

"And why should this be so, Sir, may I ask?"

"Well, the truth is, Davy," said he, with a sigh, "I often longed to open them, and uncork a bottle of ale, or brandy, or, maybe, sherry, and sore tempted I felt to do it when I was

drinking my buttermilk of a night, but then I'd say to myself, 'Ain't you well and hearty? keep cordials for the time when you are old, and feeble, and need support; don't be giving yourself bad habits, that maybe some fifteen or twenty years hence you'll be sorry for.' There's the reason, now, and I see by your face you don't agree with me."

Dunn made no answer, but taking up a knife he speedily cut the cordage of a large hamper, and as speedily covered a table with a variety of bottles.

"We'll drink this to the Queen's health, father," said he, holding up a flask of rare hock; "and this to the 'House of Lords,' for which estimable body I mean to return thanks; and then, father, I'll give 'Prosperity to the landed interest and the gentry of Ireland,' for which you shall speak."

Dunn went gaily along in this jesting fashion while he emptied the hamper of its contents, displaying along the dresser a goodly line of bottles, whose shape and corkage guaranteed their excellence. Meanwhile, an old servant woman had prepared the table, and was busily engaged with the materials of the meal.

"If I only thought we were going to have a feast, Davy, I'd have made her light a fire in the parlour," said the old man, apologetically.

"We're better here, Sir; it's cosier and homelier, and I know you think so. Keep your own corner, father, and I'll sit here."

With appetites sharpened by the sea air and a long fast, they seated themselves at table and eat heartily. If their eyes met, a smile of pleasant recognition was exchanged; for while the old man gazed almost rapturously on his illustrious son, Dunn bent a look of scarcely inferior admiration on that patriarchal face, whereon time seemed but to mellow the traits that marked its wisdom.

"And what name do they give this, Davy?" said he, as he held up his glass to the light.

"Burgundy, father—the king of wines. The wine-merchant names this Chambertin, which was the favourite drinking of the great Napoleon."

"I wonder at that, now," said the old man, sententiously.

"Wonder at it! And why so, father?—is it not admirable wine?"

"Its just for that reason, Davy; every sup I swallow sets me a-dreaming of wonderful notions—things I know the next

minute is quite impossible—but I feel when the wine is on my lips as if they were all easy and practicable.”

“After all, father, just remember that you cannot imagine anything one-half so strange as the change in our own actual condition. There you sit, with your own clear head, to remind you of when and how you began life, and here am I!—for I am, as sure as if I held my patent in my hand—the Right Honourable Lord Castledunn.”

“To your Lordship’s good health and long life,” said the old man, fervently.

“And now to a worthier toast, father—Lady Castledunn that is to be.”

“With all my heart. Lady Castledunn, whoever she is.”

“I said, ‘that is to be,’ father; and I have given you her name—the Lady Augusta Arden.”

“I never heard of her,” muttered the old man, dreamily.

“An Earl’s daughter, Sir; the ninth Earl of Glengariff,” said Dunn, pompously.

“What’s her fortune, Davy? She ought to bring you a good fortune.”

“Say, rather, Sir, it is I that should make a splendid settlement—so proud a connexion should meet its suitable acknowledgment.”

“I understand little about them things, Davy; but there’s one thing I do know, there never was the woman born I’d make independent of me if she was my wife. It isn’t in nature, and it isn’t in reason.”

“I can only say, Sir, that with *your* principles you would not marry into the Peerage.”

“Maybe I’d find one would suit me as well elsewhere.”

“That is very possible, Sir,” was the dry reply.

“And if she cost less, maybe she’d wear as well,” said the old man, peevishly; “but I suppose your Lordship knows best what suits your Lordship’s station.”

“That also is possible, Sir,” said Dunn, coldly.

The old man’s brow darkened, he pushed his glass from him, and looked offended and displeased.

Dunn quickly saw the change that had passed over him, and cutting the wire of a champagne flask he filled out a foaming tumbler of the generous wine, saying, “Drink this to your own good health, father—to the man whose wise teachings and prudent maxims have made his son a foremost figure in the age, and who has no higher pride than to own where he got his earliest lessons.”

"Is it true, Davy—are them words true?" asked the old man, trembling with eagerness.

"As true as that I sit here." And Dunn drained his glass as he spoke.

The old man, partly wearied by the late sitting, partly confused by all the strange tidings he had heard, drooped his head upon his chest and breathed heavily, muttering indistinctly, a few broken and incoherent words. Lost in his own reveries, Dunn had not noticed this drowsy stupor, when suddenly the old man said,

"Davy—are you here, Davy?"

"Yes, father, here beside you."

"What a wonderful dream I had, Davy," he continued; "I dreamed you were made a Lord, and that the Queen sent for you, and I was looking everywhere, up and down, for the fine cloak with the ermine all over it that you had to wear before her Majesty; sorra a one of me could find it at all; at last I put my hand on it, and was going to put it on your shoulders, when what should it turn out but a shroud!—ay, a shroud!"

"You are tired, father; these late hours are bad for you. Finish that glass of wine, and I'll say good night."

"I wonder what sign a shroud is, Davy?" mumbled the old man, pertinaciously adhering to the dream. "A coffin, they say, is a wedding."

"It is not a vigorous mind like yours, father, that lends faith to such miserable superstitions."

"That is just what they are not. Dreams is dreams, Davy."

"Just so, Sir; and, being dreams, have neither meaning nor consistency."

"How do you know that more than me? Who told you they were miserable superstitions? I call them warnings—warnings that come out of our own hearts; and they come to us in our sleep just because that's the time our minds is not full of cares and troubles, but is just taking up whatever chances to cross them. What made Luke Davis dream of a paycock's feather the night his son was lost at sea? Answer me that if you can."

"These are unprofitable themes, father; we only puzzle ourselves when we discuss them. Difficult as they are to believe, they are still harder to explain."

"I don't want to explain them," said the old man, sternly, for he deemed that the very thought of such inquiry had in it something presumptuous.

"Well, father," said Dunn, rising, "I sincerely trust you will

sleep soundly now, and be disturbed by none of these fancies. I must hasten away. I leave for Belfast by the early train, and have a mass of letters to answer before that."

"When am I to see you again, Davy?" asked the old man, eagerly.

"Very soon, I hope, Sir; as soon as I can, of that you may be certain," said he, cordially.

"Let it be soon, then, Davy, for the meeting does me good. I feel to-night ten years younger than before you came, and it isn't the wine either, 'tis the sight of your face and the touch of your hand. Good night, and my blessing be with you!" And a tear coursed down his scared cheek as he spoke.

CHAPTER LXXXIV.

A SHOCK.

It was past midnight when Davenport Dunn reached his own house. His return was unexpected, and it was some time before he gained admission. The delay, however, did not excite his impatience; his head was so deeply occupied with cares and thoughts for the future, that he was scarcely conscious of the time he had been kept waiting.

Mr. Clowes, hurriedly summoned from his bed, came up full of apologies and excuses.

"We did not expect you till to-morrow, Sir, by the late packet," said he, in some confusion. Dunn made no answer, and the other went on: "Mr. Hanks, too, thought it not improbable you would not be here before Wednesday."

"When was he here?"

"To-day, Sir; he left that oak box here this morning, and those letters, Sir."

While Dunn carelessly turned over the superscriptions, among which he found none to interest him, Clowes repeatedly pressed his master to take some supper, or at least a biscuit and a glass of dry sherry.

"Send for Mr. Hanks," said Dunn, at last, not condescending to notice the entreaties of his butler. "Let him wait for me here when he comes." And so saying, he took a candle and passed up-stairs.

Mr. Clowes was too well acquainted with his master's temper to obtrude unseasonably upon him, so that he glided noiselessly away till such time as he might be wanted.

When Dunn entered the drawing-room, he lighted the candles of the candelabra over the chimney and some of those which

occupied the branches along the walls, and then, turning the key in the door, sat down to contemplate the new and splendid decorations of the apartment.

The task had been confided to skilful hands, and no more attempted than rooms of moderate size and recent architecture permitted. The walls, of a very pale green, displayed to advantage a few choice pictures—Italian scenes by Turner, a Cuypp or two, and a Mieris—all of them of a kind to interest those who had no connoisseurship to be gratified. A clever statuette of the French Emperor, a present graciously bestowed by himself, stood on a console of malachite, and two busts of whig statesmen occupied brackets at either side of a vast mirror. Except these, there was little ornament, and the furniture seemed rather selected for the indulgence of ease and comfort than for show or display. A few bronzes, some curious carvings in ivory, an enamelled miniature, and some illuminated missals were scattered about amongst illustrated books and aquarelles, but in no great profusion; nor was there that indiscriminate litter which too frequently imparts to the salon the character of a curiosity-shop. The rooms, in short were eminently habitable.

Over the chimney in the back drawing-room was a clever sketch, by Thorburn, of Lady Augusta Arden. She was in a riding-habit, and standing with one hand on the mane of an Arab pony—a beautiful creature presented to her by Dunn. While he stood admiring the admirable likeness, and revolving in his mind the strange traits of that thoughtfulness which had supplied the picture—for it was all Sybella Kellett's doing—every detail of the decorations, the colour of the walls, the paintings, even to the places they occupied, had all been supplied by her—Dunn started, and a sudden sickness crept over him. On a little table beside the fireplace stood a small gold salver, carved by Cellini, and which served to hold a few objects, such as coins, and rings, and antique gems. What could it be, then, amidst these century-old relics, which now overcame and so unmanned him that he actually grew pale as death, and sank at last, trembling, into a seat, cold perspiration on his face, and his very lips livid?

Mixed up amid the articles of *vertu* on that salver was an old-fashioned penknife with a massive handle of blood-stone, to which a slip of paper was attached, containing two or three words in Miss Kellett's hand. Now the sight of this article in that place so overcame Dunn that it was some minutes ere he could reach out his hand to take the knife. When giving to Miss

Kellett the charge of several rare and valuable objects, he had entrusted her with keys to certain drawers, leaving to her own judgment the task of selection. He had totally forgotten that this knife was amongst these, but even had he remembered the circumstance, it would not have caused alarm, naturally supposing how little worthy of notice such an object would seem amidst others of price and rarity. And yet there it was, and, by the slip of paper fastened to it, attesting a special notice.

With an effort almost convulsive he at last seized the knife, and read the words. They were simply these: "A penknife, of which Mr. Dunn can probably supply the history." He dropped it as he read, and lay back, with a sense of fainting sickness.

The men of action and energy can face the positive present perils of life with a far bolder heart than they can summon to confront the terrors of conscience-stricken imagination. In the one case, danger assumes a shape and a limit; in the other, it looms out of distance, vast, boundless, and full of mystery. She knew, then, the story of his boyish shame; she had held the tale secretly in her heart through all their intercourse, reading his nature, mayhap, through the clue of that incident, and tracing out his path in life by the light it afforded; doubtless, too, she knew of his last scene with her father—that terrible interview, wherein the dying man uttered a prediction that was almost a curse; she had treasured up these memories, and accepted his aid with seeming frankness, and yet, all the while that she played the grateful, trusting dependent, she had been slowly pursuing a vengeance. If Paul Kellett had confided to her the story of this childish transgression, he had doubtless revealed to her how heavily it had been avenged—how, with a persistent, persecuting hate, Dunn had tracked him, through difficulty and debt, to utter ruin. She had therefore read him in his real character, and had devoted herself to a revenge deeper than his own. Ay, he was countermined!"

Such was the turn of his thoughts, as he sat there wiping the cold sweat that broke from his forehead, and cursing the blindness that had so long deceived him; and he, whose deep craft had carried him triumphant through all the hardest trials of the world, the man who had encountered the most subtle intellects, the great adventurer in a whole ocean of schemes, was to be the dupe and sport of a girl!

And now, amid his self-accusings, there rose up that strange attempt at compromise the baffled heart so often clings to, that he had, at times, half-suspected this deep and secret treachery—

that she had not been either so secret or so crafty as she fancied herself. "If my mind," so reasoned he, "had not been charged with far weightier themes, I should have detected her at once; all her pretended gratitude, all her assumed thankfulness, had never deceived *me*; her insignificance was her safeguard. And yet withal, I sometimes felt, she is too deeply in our confidence—she sees too much of the secret machinery of our plans. While I exulted over the ignoble dependence she was doomed to—while I saw, with a savage joy, how our lots in life were reversed, was I self-deceived?"

So impressed was he with the idea of a game in which he had been defeated, that he went over in his mind every circumstance he could recal of his intercourse with her. Passages the simplest—words of little significance—incidents the most trivial—he now charged with deepest meaning. Amidst these, there was one for which he could find no solution—why had she so desired to be the owner of the cottage near Bantry? It was there that Driscoll had discovered the Conway papers. Was it possible—the thought flashed like lightning on him—that there was any concert between the girl and this man? This suspicion no sooner occurred to him than it took firm hold of his mind. None knew better than Dunn the stuff Driscoll was made of, and knowing, besides, how he had, by his own seeming lukewarmness, affronted that crafty schemer, it was by no means improbable that such an alliance as this existed. And this last discovery of documents—how fortunate was it that Hankses had secured them. The papers might or might not be important; at all events, the new Lord Lackington might be brought to terms by their means; he would have come to his Peerage so unexpectedly, that all the circumstances of the contested claim would be strange to him. This was a point to be looked at; and as he reasoned thus, again did he go back to Sybella Kellett, and what the nature of her game might be, and how it should first display itself.

A tap at the door startled him. "Mr. Hankses is below, Sir," said Clowes.

"I will be with him in a moment," replied Dunn; and again relapsed into his musings.

CHAPTER LXXXV.

A MASTER AND MAN.

"Is she gone?—where to?" cried Dunn, without answering Mr. Hanks's profuse salutations and welcomes.

"Yes, Sir; she sailed yesterday."

"Sailed, and for where?"

"For Malta, Sir, in the *Euxine* steamer. Gone to her brother in the Crimea. One of my people saw her go on board at Southampton."

"Was she alone?"

"Quite alone, Sir. My man was present when she paid the boatmen. She had very little luggage, but they demanded half a guinea——"

"What of Driscoll? Have you traced him?" asked Dunn, impatient at the minuteness of this detail.

"He left London for Havre on the 12th of last month, Sir, with a passport for Italy. He carried one of Hartwell's circulars for three hundred pounds, and was to have taken a courier at Paris, but ~~did not~~."

"And where is he now?" asked Dunn, abruptly.

"I am unable to say, Sir," said Hanks, almost abjectly, for he felt self-rebuked in the acknowledgment. "My last tidings of him came from Como—a new Hydropathic Institution there."

"Expecting to find the Viscount Lackington," said Dunn, with a sardonic laugh. "Death was before you, Master Driscoll; you did not arrive in time for even the funeral. I say, Hanks," added he, quickly, "what of the new Viscount? Has he answered our letters?"

"Not directly, Sir; but there came a short note signed 'C. Christopher,' stating that his Lordship had been very ill, and

was detained at Ems, and desiring to have a Bank post-bill for two hundred forwarded to him by return."

"You sent it?"

"Of course, Sir; the letter had some details which proved it to be authentic."

"And the sum a trifle," broke in Dunn. "She is scarcely at Malta by this, Hanks. What am I thinking of? She'll not reach it before next Friday or Saturday. Do you remember young Kellett's regiment?"

"No, Sir."

"Well, find it out. I'll write to the Horse Guards to-morrow to have him promoted—to give him an Ensigncy in some regiment serving in India. Whom do you know at Malta, Hanks?"

"I know several, Sir; Edmond Grant, in the Storekeeper's Department; James Hocksley, Second Harbour-Master; Paul Wesley, in the Under-Secretary's Office."

"Any of them will do. Telegraph to detain her; that her brother is coming home; she must not go to the Crimea." There was a stern fixity of purpose declared in the way these last words were spoken, which at the same time warned Hanks from asking any explanation of them. "And now for business. What news from Arigua—any ore?"

"Plenty, Sir; the new shaft has turned out admirably. It is yielding upwards of twenty-eight per cent., and Holmes offers thirty pounds a ton for the raw cobalt."

"I don't care for that, Sir. I asked how were shares," said Dunn, peevishly.

"Not so well as might be expected, Sir. The shake at Glen-gariff was felt widely."

"What do you mean? The shares fell, but they rose again; they suffered one of those fluctuations that attend on all commercial or industrial enterprises; but they rallied even more quickly than they went down. When I left town yesterday they were at one hundred and forty-three."

"I know it, Sir. I received your telegram, and I showed it to Bayle and Childers, but they only smiled, and said, 'So much the better for the holders.'"

"I defy any man—I don't care what may be his abilities or what his zeal—to benefit this country!" exclaimed Dunn, passionately. "There is amongst Irishmen, towards each other, such an amount of narrow jealousy—mean, miserable, envious rivalry—as would swamp the best intentions, and destroy the

wisest plans that ever were conceived. May my fate prove a warning to whoever is fool enough to follow me!"

Was it that when Dunn thus spoke he hoped to persuade Mr. Hanks that he was a noble-hearted patriot, sorrowing over the errors of an ungrateful country? Did he fancy that his subtle lieutenant, the associate of all his deep intrigues, the confidant of his darkest schemes, was suddenly to see in him nothing but magnanimity of soul and single-hearted devotedness? No, I cannot presume to say that he indulged in any such delusion. He uttered the words just to please himself—to flatter himself! as some men drink off a cordial to give them Dutch courage. There are others that enunciate grand sentiments, high sounding and magniloquent, the very music and resonance of their words imparting a warm glow within them.

It is a common error to imagine that such "stage thunder" is confined to that after-dinner eloquence in whose benefit the canons of truth-telling are all repealed. Far from it. The practice enters into every hour of every-day life, and the greatest knave that ever rogued never cheated the world half as often as he cheated himself!

As though it had been a glass of brown sherry that he swallowed, Mr. Dunn felt "better" after he had uttered these fine words. He experienced a proud satisfaction in thinking what a generous heart beat within his own waistcoat, and thus reassured, he thought well of the world at large.

"And Ossory, Mr. Hanks—how is Ossory?"

"A hundred and fourteen, with a look upwards," responded Mr. Hanks. "Since the day of 'the run' deposits have largely increased. Indeed, I may say we are now the great country gentry bank of the midland. We discount freely, too, and we lend generously."

"I shall want some ready money soon, Hanks," said Dunn, as he paced the room with his hands behind his back, and his head bent forward. "You'll have to sell out some of those Harbour shares."

"Bantry's, Sir? Glumthal's have them as securities!"

"So they have; I forgot. Well, St. Columbs, or the Patent Fuel, or that humbug discovery of Patterson's, the Irish Asphalt. There's an American fellow, by the way, wants that."

"They're very low—very low, all these, Sir," said Hanks, lugubriously. "They sank so obstinately that I just withdrew our name quietly, so that we can say any day we have long ceased any connexion with these enterprises."

"She'll scarcely make any delay in Malta, Hanks, Your message ought to be there by Thursday at latest." And then, as if ashamed of showing where his thoughts were straying, he said, "All kinds of things—odds and ends of every sort—are jostling each other in my brain to-night."

"You want rest, Sir; you want nine or ten hours of sound sleep."

"Do I look fatigued or harassed?" asked Dunn, with an eagerness that almost startled the other.

"A little tired, Sir; not more than that," cautiously answered Hanks.

"But I don't *feel* tired. I am not conscious of any weariness," said he, pettishly. "I suspect that you are not a very acute physiognomist, Hanks. I have told you," added he, hastily, "I shall want some twelve or fifteen thousand pounds soon. Look out, too, for any handsome country seat—in the south I should prefer it—that may be in the market. I'll not carry out my intentions about Kellett's Court. It is a tumble-down old concern, and would cost us more in repairs than a handsome house fit to inhabit."

"Am I to have the honour of offering my felicitations, Sir," said Hanks, obsequiously—"are the reports of the newspapers as to a certain happy event to be relied on?"

"You mean as to my marriage? Yes, perfectly true. I might, in a mere worldly point of view, have looked higher—not higher, certainly not—but I might have contracted what many would have called a more advantageous connexion—in fact, I might have had any amount of money I could care for—but I determined for what I deemed the wiser course. You are probably not aware that this is a very long attachment. Lady Augusta and myself have been as good as engaged to each other for—for a number of years. She was very young when we met first—just emerging from early girlhood—but the sentiment of her youthful choice has never varied, and, on *my* part, the attachment has been as constant."

"Indeed, Sir!" said Hanks, sorely puzzled what to make this declaration.

"I know," said Dunn, returning rapidly to the theme, "that nothing will seem less credible to the world at large than a man of *my* stamp marrying for love! The habit is to represent us as a sort of human monster, a creature of wily, money-getting faculties, shrewd, overreaching, and successful. They won't give us feelings, Hanks. They won't let us understand the ties

of affection and the charms of a home. Well," said he, after a long pause, "there probably never lived a man more mistaken, more misconceived by the world than myself."

Hankes heaved a heavy sigh; it was, he felt, the safest thing he could do, for he did not dare to trust himself with a single word. The sigh, however, was a most profound one, and plainly as words declared the compassionate contempt he entertained for a world so short-sighted and so meanly minded.

"After all," resumed Dunn, "it is the penalty every man must pay for eminence. The poor little nibblers at the rind of fortune satisfy their unsuccess when they say, 'Look at him with all his money!'"

Another and deeper sigh here broke from Hankes, who was really losing all clue to the speaker's reflections.

"I'm certain, Hankes, you have heard observations of this kind five hundred times."

"Ay, have I, Sir," answered he in hurried confusion—"five thousand!"

"Well, and what was your reply, Sir? How did you meet such remarks?" said Dunn, sternly.

"Put them down, Sir—put them down at once—that is, I acknowledge that there was a sort of fair ground—I agreed in thinking that, everything considered, and looking to what we saw every day around us in life—and Heaven knows it is a strange world, and the more one sees of it the less he knows——"

"I'm curious to hear," said Dunn, with a stern fixedness of manner, "in what quarter you heard these comments on my character."

Hankes trembled from head to foot. He was in the witness-box, and felt that one syllable might place him in the dock.

"You never heard one word of the kind in your life, Sir, and you *know* it," said Dunn, with a savage energy of tone that made the other sick with fear. "If ever there was a man whose daily life refuted such a calumny it was myself."

Dunn's emotions were powerful, and he walked the room from end to end with long and determined strides. Suddenly halting at last, he looked Hankes steadily in the face, and said,

"It was the Kellett girl dared thus to speak of me, was it not? The truth, Sir—the truth, I *will* have it out of you!"

"Well, I must own you are right. It was Miss Kellett."

Heaven forgive you, Mr. Hankes, for the lie, inasmuch as you never intended to tell it till it was suggested to you.

"Can you recal the circumstance which elicited this remark? I mean," said he, with an affected carelessness of manner "how did it occur? You were chatting together—discussing people and events, eh?"

"Yes, Sir, just so."

"And she observed——do you chance to remember the phrase she used?"

"I give you my word of honour I do not, Sir," said Hanks, with a sincere earnestness.

"People who fancy themselves clever—and Miss Kellett is one of that number—have a trick of eliminating every trait of a man's character from some little bias—some accidental bend given to his youthful mind. I am almost certain—nay, I feel persuaded—it was by some such light that young lady read me. She had heard I was remarkable as a schoolboy for this, that, or t'other—I saved my pocket-money or lent it out at interest. Come, was it not with the aid of an ingenious explanation of this kind she interpreted me?"

Mr. Hanks shook his head, and looked blankly disconsolate.

"Not that I value such people's estimate of me," said Dunn, angrily. "Calumniate, vilify, depreciate as they will, here I stand with my foot on the first step of the Peerage. Ay, Hanks, I have made my own terms, the first *Gazette* after the new elections will announce Mr. Davenport Dunn as Lord Castledunn."

Hanks actually bounded on his chair. Had he been the faithful servant of some learned alchemist, watching patiently for years the wondrous manipulations and subtle combinations of his master, following him from crucible to crucible, and from alembic to alembic, till the glorious moment when, out of smoke and vapour, the yellow glow of the long-sought metal gleamed before his eyes, he could not have regarded his chief with a more devoted homage.

Dunn read "WORSHIP" in every lineament of the other's face. It was as honest veneration as his nature could compass, and, sooth to say, the great man liked it, and sniffed his insense with the air of Jove himself.

"I mean to take care of *you*, Hanks," said he, with a bland protectiveness. "I do not readily forget the men who have served me faithfully. Of course we must draw out of all our enterprises here. I intend at once to realise—yes, Hanks—to realise a certain comfortable sum and withdraw."

These were not very explicit nor very determinate expressions, but they were amply intelligible to him who heard them.

"To wind-up, Sir, in short," said Hanks, significantly.

"Yes, Hanks, to 'wind-up.'"

"A difficult matter—a very difficult matter, Sir."

"Difficulties have never deterred me from anything, Mr. Hanks. The only real difficulty I acknowledge in life is to choose which of them I will adopt; that done, the rest is matter of mere detail." Mr. Dunn now seated himself at a table, and in the calm and quiet tone with which he treated every business question, he explained to Hanks his views on each of the great interests he was concerned in. Shares in home speculations were to be first exchanged for foreign scrip, and these afterwards sold. Of the vast securities of private individuals pledged for loans, or given as guarantees, only such were to be redeemed as belonged to persons over whom Dunn had no control. Depositary as he was of family secrets, charged with the mysterious knowledge of facts whose publication would bring ruin and disgrace on many, this knowledge was to have its price and its reward; and as he ran his finger down the list of names so compromised, Hanks could mark the savage exultation of his look while he muttered unintelligibly to himself.

Dunn stopped at the name of the Viscount Lackington, and, leaning his head on his hand, said, "Don't let us forget that message to Malta."

"A heavy charge that, Sir," said Hanks. "The Ossory has got all his Lordship's titles; and we have set them down, too, for twenty-one thousand seven hundred above their value."

"Do you know who is the Viscount Lackington?" asked Dunn, with a strange significance.

"No, Sir."

"Neither do I," said Dunn, hurriedly following him. "Mayhap it may cost some thousands of pounds and some tiresome talk to decide that question; at all events, it will cost you or me nothing."

"The Earl of Glengariff's claim must, I suppose, be satisfied, Sir?"

"Of course it must, and the very first of all! But I am not going to enter minutely into these things now, Hanks. I need a little of that rest you were just recommending me to take. Be here to-morrow at twelve; do not mention my arrival to any one but come over with the Ossory statement and the two or three other most important returns."

Mr. Hanks rose to withdraw, and as he moved towards the door his eye caught the oaken box, with three large seals placed by his own hand.

"You have scarcely had time to think about these papers, Sir; but they will have their importance when that Peerage case comes to be discussed. The Lackingtons were Conways——"

"Let me have a look at them," said Dunn, rapidly.

Hanks broke open the paper bands, and unlocked the box. For some time he searched through the documents as they lay, and then emptying them all upon the table, he went over them more carefully one by one. "Good Heavens!" cried he, "how can this be?"

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Dunn; "you do not pretend that they are missing?"

"They are gone—they are not here!" said the other, almost fainting from agitation.

"But these are the seals you yourself fastened on the box."

"I know it—I see it—and I can make nothing of it."

"Mr. Hanks, Mr. Hanks, this is serious," said Dunn, as he bent upon the affrighted man a look of heart-searching significance.

"I swear before Heaven—I take my most solemn oath——"

"Never mind swearing—how could they have been extricated? that is the question to be solved."

Hanks examined the seals minutely; they were his own. He scrutinised the box on every side to see if any other mode of opening it existed; but there was none. He again went through the papers—opening, shaking, sifting them one by one—and then, with a low, faint sigh, he sank down upon a chair, the very image of misery and dismay. "Except it was the devil himself——"

"The devil has plenty of far more profitable work on hand, Sir," said Dunn, sternly; and then, in a calmer tone, added, "Is it perfectly certain that you ever saw the documents you allude to? and when?"

"Saw them? Why I held them in my hands for several minutes. It was I myself replaced them in the box before sealing it."

"And what interval of time occurred between your reading them and sealing them up?"

"A minute—half a minute perhaps; stay," cried he, sud-

denly, "I remember now that I left the room to call the landlord. Miss Kellett remained behind."

With a dreadful imprecation Dunn struck his forehead with his hand, and sank into his seat. "What cursed folly," cried he, bitterly—and what misfortune and ruin may it beget!"

"It was then that she took them—that was the very moment," muttered Hanks, as he followed on his own dreary thoughts.

"My father was right," said Dunn, below his breath; "that girl will bring sorrow on us yet."

"But, after all, what value could they have in her eyes? She knows nothing about the questions they refer to; she could not decipher the very titles of the documents."

"I ought to have known—I ought to have foreseen it," cried Dunn, passionately. "What has my whole life been, but a struggle against the blunders, the follies, and the faults of those who should have served me! Other men are fortunate in their agents. It was reserved for me to have nothing but incapables, or worse."

"If you mean to include *me* in either of these categories, Sir, will you please to say which?" said Hanks, reddening with anger.

"Take your choice—either, or both!" said Dunn, savagely.

"A man must be very strong in honesty that can afford to speak in this fashion of others," said Hanks, his voice tremulous with rage. "At all events, the world shall declare whether he be right or not."

"How do you mean, 'the world shall declare?' Is it that what has passed between us here can be made matter for public notoriety? Would you dare——"

"Oh! I would dare a great deal, Sir, if I was pushed to it," said Hanks, scoffingly. "I would dare, for instance, to let the world we are speaking of into some of the mysteries of modern banking. I have a vast amount of information to give as to the formation of new companies—how shares are issued, cancelled, and reissued. I could tell some amusing anecdotes about title-deeds of estates that never were transferred——"

Why is it that Mr. Hanks, now in the full flood of his sarcasm, stops so suddenly? What has arrested his progress? and why does he move so hurriedly towards the door, which Dunn has, however, already reached before him and locked? Was it something in the expression of Dunn's features that alarmed him?—truly, there was in his look what might have

appalled a stouter heart—or was it that Dunn had suddenly taken something, he could not discern what, from a drawer, and hastily hidden it in his pocket?

“Merciful Heavens!” cried Hanks, trembling all over, “you would not dare——”

“Like yourself, Sir, I would dare much if pushed to it,” said Dunn, in a voice that now had recovered all its wonted composure. “But come, Hanks, it is not a hasty word or an ungenerous speech is to break up the ties of a long friendship. I was wrong—I was unjust—I ask your pardon for it. You have served me too faithfully and too well to be requited thus. Give me your hand, and say you forgive me.”

“Indeed, Sir, I must own I scarcely expected—that is, I never imagined——”

“Come, come, do not do it grudgingly—tell me frankly all is forgiven.”

Hanks took the outstretched hand, and muttered some broken, unintelligible words.

“There, now, sit down and think no more of this folly.” He opened a large pocket-book as he spoke, and searching for some time amongst its contents, at last took forth a small slip of paper. “Ay, here it is,” said he: “‘Sale of West Indian estates—resident Commissionership—two thousand per annum, with allowance for house,’ &c. Sir Hepton Wallis was to have it. Would this suit *you*, Hanks? the climate agrees with many constitutions.”

“Oh, as to the climate,” said Hanks, trembling with eagerness and delight, “I’d not fear it.”

“And then with ample leave of absence from time to time, and a retiring allowance, after six years’ service, of—if I remember aright—twelve hundred a year. What say you? It must be filled up soon. Shall I write your name instead of Sir Hepton’s?”

“Oh, Sir, this is indeed generosity!”

“No, Hanks, mere justice—nothing more. The only merit I can lay claim to in the matter is the sacrifice I make in separating myself from a well-tried and trusted adherent.”

“These reports shall be ready immediately, Sir,” said Hanks. “I’ll not go to bed to-night——”

“We have ample time for everything, Hanks; don’t fatigue yourself, and be here at twelve to-morrow.”

CHAPTER LXXXVI.

ANNESLEY BEECHER IN A NEW PART.

ABOUT five weeks have elapsed since we last sojourned with Grog Davis and his party at the little village of Holbach. Five weeks are a short period in human life, but often enough has it sufficed to include great events, and to make marvellous changes in a man's fortunes! Now, the life they all led here might seem well suited to exclude such calculations. Nothing seemed less likely to elicit vicissitudes. It was a calm, tame monotony, each day so precisely like its predecessor, that it was often hard to remember how the week stole on. The same landscape, with almost the same effects of sun and shadow, stretched daily before their eyes; the same gushing water foamed and fretted; the same weeds bent their heads to the flood; the self-same throbbing sounds of busy mills mingled with the rushing streams; the very clouds, as they dragged themselves lazily up the mountain side, and then broke into fragments on the summit, seemed the same; and yet in that little world of three people there was the endless conflict of hope and fear, and all the warring interests which distract great masses of men filled their hearts and engaged their minds.

At first, Beecher chafed and fretted at the delay; Lizzy appeared but rarely, and when she did it was with a strange reserve, almost amounting to constraint, that he could not comprehend. She did not seem angry or offended with him, simply more distant. Her high spirits, too, were gone,—no more the light-hearted, gay, and playful creature he remembered,—she was calm even to seriousness. A look of thoughtful preoccupation marked her as she sat silently gazing on the landscape, or watching the eddies of the circling river. There was nothing

—save a slight increase of paleness—to denote sorrow in her appearance; her features were placid and her expression tranquil. If her voice had lost its ringing music, it had acquired a tone of deep and melting softness that seemed to leave an echo in the heart that heard it. To this change, which at first chilled and repelled Beecher, he grew day by day to accustom himself. If her mood was one less calculated to enliven and to cheer him, it was yet better adapted to make his confidence. He could talk to her more freely of himself than heretofore. No longer did he stand in dread of the sharp and witty epigrams with which she used to quiz his opinions and ridicule his notions of life. She would listen to him now with patience, if not with interest, and she would hear him with attention as he talked for hours on, the one sole theme he loved, himself. And, oh, young ladies—not that you need any counsels of mine in such matters—but if, perchance, my words of advice should have any weight with you—let me impress this lesson on your hearts: that for the man who is not actually in love with you, but only “spooney,” there is no such birdlime as the indulgence of his selfishness. Let him talk away about his dogs and his horses, his exploits in China or the Crimea, his fishings in Norway, his yachtings in the Levant; let him discourse about his own affairs, of business as well as pleasure; how briefs are pouring in or patients multiply; hear him as he tells you of his sermon before the bishop, or his examination at Burlington House,—trust me, no theme will make *him* so eloquent nor *you* so interesting. Of all “serials”—as the phrase is—there is none can be carried out to so many “numbers” as Egotism, and though the snowball grows daily bigger, it rolls along even more easily.

I am not going to say that Lizzy Davis did this of “prepenance”—I am even candid enough to acknowledge to you that I am not quite sure I can understand her. She had ways of acting and thinking peculiarly her own. She was not always what the French call “conséquente,” but she was marvellously quick to discover she was astray, and “try back.” She was one of those people who have more difficulty in dealing with themselves than with others. She had an instinctive appreciation of those whose natures she came in contact with, joined to a strong desire to please; and, lastly, there was scarcely a human temperament with which she could not sympathise somewhere. She let Beecher talk on, because it pleased *him*, and pleasing *him* became at last a pleasure to herself. When he recalled little traits of generosity, the kind things he had done here, the good-natured

acts he had done there, she led him on to feel a more manly pride in himself than when recounting tales of his sharp practices on the Turf and his keen exploits in the Ring.

Beecher saw this leaning on her part, and ascribed it all to her "ignorance of the world," and firmly believed that when she saw more of life she would think more highly of his intellect than even of his heart. Poor fellow! they were beautifully balanced, and phrenology, for once, would have its triumph in showing the mental and the moral qualities in equilibrium. After the first week they were always together, for Davis was continually on the road, now to Neuweid, now to Höchst. The letters and telegrams that he despatched and received were incredible in number, and when jested with on the amount of his correspondence by Beecher, his only answer was, "It's all *your* business, my boy—the whole concerns *you*." Now, Annesley Beecher was far too much of a philosopher to trouble his head about anything which could be avoided, and to find somebody who devoted himself to his interests, opened and read the dunning appeals of creditors, answered their demands by "renewals," or cajoled them by promises, was one of the highest luxuries he could imagine. Indeed, if Grog would only fight for him and go to gaol for him, he'd have deemed his happiness complete. "And who knows," thought he, "but it may come to that yet. I seem to have thrown a sort of fascination over the old fellow that may lead him any lengths."

Meanwhile, there was extending over himself another web of fascination not the less complete that he never perceived it. His first waking thought was of Lizzy. As he came down to breakfast, his dress showed how studiously he cultivated appearance. The breakfast over, he sat down to his German lesson beside her with a patient perseverance that amazed him. There he was, with addled head and delighted heart, conjugating "Ich liebe," and longing for the day when he should reach the imperative mood; and then they walked long country walks into the dark beech woods, along grassy alleys where no footfall sounded, or they strayed beside some river's bank, half fancying that none had ever strolled over the same sward before. And how odd it was to see the Honourable Annesley Beecher, the great lion of the Guards' Club, the once celebrity of the Coventry, carrying a little basket on his arm, like a stage peasant in a comic opera, with the luncheon, or mayhap bearing a massive stone in his arms to bridge a stream for Lizzy to cross. Poor fellow! he did these things with a good will, and even in his awkwardness

there was that air of "gentleman" which never left him; and then he would laugh so heartily at his own ineptitude, and join in Lizzy's mirth at the mischances that befel him. And was it not delightful, through all these charming scenes, on the high mountain side, in the deep heather, or deep in some tangled glen, with dog-roses and honeysuckle around them, he could still talk of himself and she could listen?

For the life of him he could not explain how it was that the time slipped over so pleasantly. As he himself said, "there was not much to see, and nothing to do," and yet, somehow, the day was always too short for either. He wanted to write to his brother, to his sister-in-law, to Dunn, to his man of business—meaning the Jew who raised money for him—but never could find time. He was so puzzled by the problem that he actually asked Lizzy to explain it, but she only laughed.

Now and then, when he chanced to be all alone, a sudden thought would strike him that he was leading a life of inglorious idleness. He would count up how many weeks it was since he had seen a *Bell's Life*, and try to calculate what races were coming off that very same day; then he would draw a mind-picture of Tattersall's on a settling day, and wonder who were the defaulters, and who were getting passports for the Continent; and he would wind up his astonishment by thinking that Grog was exactly leading the same indolent existence, "although we have that 'grand book with the martingle,' and might be smashing the bank at Baden every night." That a man should have the cap of Fortunatus, and yet never try it on, even just for the experiment's sake, was downright incredible. You might not want money—not that he had ever met the man in that predicament yet—you might perhaps have no very strong desire for this, that, or t'other, yet, somehow, "the power was such a jolly thing!" The fact that you could go in and win whenever you pleased was a marvellously fine consideration. As for himself—so he reasoned—he did not exactly know why, but he thought his present life a very happy one. He never was less beset with cares: he had no duns; there was not a tailor in Bond-street knew his address; the very Jews had not traced him; he was as free as air. Like most men accustomed to eat and drink of the best, the simple fare of an humble inn pleased him. Grog, whenever he saw him, was good-humoured and gay; and as for Lizzy, "of all the girls he had ever met, she was the only one ever understood him."

As Annesley Beecher comprehended his own phrase being

"understood" was no such bad thing. It meant, in the first place, a generous appreciation of all motives for good, even though they never went beyond motives—a hopeful trust in some unseen, unmanifested excellence of character—a broadcast belief that, making a due allowance for temptations, human frailties, and the doctrine of chances—this latter most of all—the balance would always be found in favour of good *versus* evil; and, secondly, that all the imputed faults and vices of such natures as *his*, were little else than the ordinary weaknesses of "the best of us." Such is being "understood," good reader; and, however it may chance with others, I hope that "you and I may."

But Lizzy Davis understood him even better and deeper than all this. She knew him—if not better than I do myself, at least better than I am able to depict to you. Apart, then, from the little "distractions" I have mentioned, Beecher was very happy. It had been many a long day since he felt himself so light-hearted and so kindly minded to the world at large. He neither wished any misfortune to befall Holt's "stable" or Shipman's "three-year old;" he did not drop off to sleep hoping that Beverley might break down or "Nightcap" spring a back sinew; and, stranger than all, he actually could awake of a morning and not wish himself the Viscount Lackington. Accustomed as he was to tell Lizzy everything, to ask her advice about all that arose, and her explanation for all that puzzled him, he could not help communicating this new phenomenon of his temperament, frankly acknowledging that it was a mystery he could not fathom.

"Nothing seems ever to puzzle you, Lizzy"—he had learned to call her Lizzy some time back—"so just tell me what can you make of it. Ain't it strange?"

"It *is* strange," said she, with a faint smile, in which a sort of sad meaning mingled.

"So strange," resumed he, "that had any one said to me, 'Beecher, you'll spend a couple of months in a little German inn, with nothing to do, nothing to see, and, what's more, it will not bore you,' I'd have answered, 'Take you fifty to one in hundreds on the double event—thousands if you like it better'—and see, hang me if I shouldn't have lost!"

"Perhaps not. If you had a heavy wager on the matter it is likely you would not have come."

"Who knows! Everything is Fate in this world. Ah, you may laugh, but it *is*, though. What else, I ask you—what

brings me here just now?—why am I walking along the river with you beside me?”

“Partly because, I hope, you find it pleasant,” said she, with a droll gravity, while something in her eyes seemed to betoken that her own thoughts amused her.

“There must be more than that,” said he, thoughtfully, for he felt the question a knotty one, and rather liked to show that he did not skulk the encounter with such difficulties.

“Partly, perhaps, because it pleases *me*,” said she, in the same quiet tone.

He shook his head, doubtingly; he had asked for an explanation, and neither of these supplied that want. “At all events, Lizzy, there is one thing you will admit—if it is Fate, one can’t help it—eh?”

“If you mean by that that you must walk along here at my side, whether you will or not, just try, for experiment’s sake, if you could not cross over the stream and leave me to go back alone.”

“Leave *you* to go back alone!” cried he, upon whom the last words were ever the most emphatic. “But why so, Lizzy; are you angry with me?—are you weary of me?”

“No, I’m not angry with you,” said she, gently.

“Wearied, then—tired of me—bored?”

“Must I pay you compliments on your agreeability, Mr. Beecher?”

“There it is again,” broke he in, pettishly, “It was only yesterday you consented to call me Annesley, and you have gone back from it already—forgotten it all!”

“No, I forget very seldom—unfortunately!” This last word was uttered to herself, and for herself.

“You will call me Annesley, then?” asked he, eagerly.

“Yes, if you wish it—Annesley.” There was a pause before she spoke the last word; and when she did utter it, her accent faltered slightly, and a faint blush tinged her cheek.

As for Beecher, his heart swelled high and proudly; he felt at that moment a strange warm glow within him that counterfeited courage; for an instant he thought he would have liked something perilous to confront—something in encountering which he might stand forth before Lizzy as a Paladin. Was it that some mysterious voice within him whispered, “She loves you—her heart is yours?” and, oh! if so, what a glorious sentiment must there be in that passion if love can move a nature like this and mould it to one great or generous ambition.

“Lizzy, I want to talk to you seriously,” said he, drawing

her arm within his own. "I have long wanted to tell you something, and if you can hear it without displeasure, I swear to you I'd not change with Lackington to-morrow! Not that it's such good fun being a younger son—few men know that better than myself—still, I repeat, that if you only say 'yes' to me, I pledge you my oath I'd rather hear it than be sure I was to win the Oaks—ay, by Heaven! Oaks and Derby too! You know now what I mean, dearest Lizzy, and do not, I beseech you, keep me longer in suspense."

She made no answer; her cheek became very pale, and a convulsive shudder passed over her; but she was calm and unmoved the next instant.

"If you love another, Lizzy," said he, and his lips trembled violently, "say so frankly. It's only like all my other luck in life, though nothing was ever as heavy as this."

There was an honesty, a sincerity in the tone of these words that seemed to touch her, for she stole a side look at his face, and the expression of her glance was of kindly pity.

"Is it true, then, that you *do* love another, Lizzy?" repeated he, with even deeper emotion.

"No!" said she, with a slow utterance.

"Will you not tell me, dearest Lizzy, if—if—I am to have any hope. I know well enough that you needn't take a poor beggar of a younger son. I know where a girl of your beauty may choose. Far better than you do *I* know, that you might have title, rank, fortune; and as for me, all I have is a miserable annuity Lackington allows me, just enough to starve on—not that I mean to go on, however, as I have been doing; no, no, by Jove! I'm round the corner now, and I intend to make play, and 'take up my running.' Your father and I understand what we're about."

What a look was that Lizzy gave him! What a piercing significance must the glance have had that sent the blood so suddenly to his face and forehead, and made him falter, and then stop.

"One thing I'll swear to you, Lizzy—swear it by all that is most solemn," cried he, at last—"if you consent to share fortunes with me, I'll never engage in anything—no matter how sure or how safe—without your full concurrence. I have been buying experience this many a year, and pretty sharply has it cost me. They make a gentleman pay his footing, I promise you; but I *do* know a thing or two at last—I *have* had my eyes opened!"

Oh, Annesley Beecher, can you not see how you are damaging your own cause? You have but to look at that averted head, or, bending round, to catch a glimpse of those fair features, and mark the haughty scorn upon them, to feel that you are pleading against yourself.

"And what may be this knowledge of which you are so proud?" said she, coldly.

"Oh, as to that," said he, in some confusion at the tone she had assumed, "it concerns many a thing you never heard of. The Turf, and the men that live by it, make a little world of their own. They don't bother their heads about parties or politics—don't care a farthing who's 'in' or who's 'out.' They keep their wits—and pretty sharp wits they are—for what goes on in Scott's stable, and how Holt stands for the St. Leger. They'd rather hear how Velocipede eat his corn, than hear all the Cabinet secrets of Europe; and for that matter, so would I."

"I do not blame you for not caring for State secrets—it is very possible they would interest you little; but surely you might imagine some more fitting career than what, after all, is a mere trading on the weakness of others. To make of an amusement a matter of profit is, in my eyes, mean—it is contemptible."

"That's not the way to look on it at all. The first men in England have race-horses."

"And precisely in the fact of their great wealth do these soar above all the ignoble associations, the Turf obliges to those who live by it."

"Well, I'll give it up; there's my word on't. I'll never put my foot in Tattersall's yard again. I'll take my name off the Turf Club—is that enough?"

She could not help smiling at the honest zeal of this sacrifice; but the smile had none of the scorn her features displayed before.

"Oh, Lizzy!" cried he, enthusiastically, "if I was sure we could just live on here as we are doing—never leave this little valley, nor see more of the world than we do daily—I'd not exchange the life for a Duke's fortune——"

"And Holt's stable," added she, laughing. "Come, you must not omit the real bribe."

He laughed heartily at this sally, and owned it was the grand temptation.

"You are certainly very good-tempered, Annesley," said she, after a pause.

"I don't think I am," said he, half piqued, for he thought

the remark contained a sort of disparagement of that sharpness on which he chiefly prided himself. "I am very hot at times."

"I meant that you bore with great good-humour from me what you might, if so disposed, have fairly enough resented as an impertinence. What do I, what could I, know of that play-world of which you spoke? How gentlemen and men of fashion regard these things must needs be mysteries to me; I only wished to imply that you might make some better use of your faculties, and that knowledge of life you possess, than in conning over a betting-book or the *Racing Calendar*."

"So I mean to do. That's exactly what I'm planning."

"Here's the soup cooling and the sherry getting hot," cried Grog, as he shouted from the window of the little inn, and waved his napkin to attract their notice.

"There's Papa making a signal to us," said Lizzy; "did you suspect it was so late?"

"Seven o'clock, by Jove!" cried Beecher, as he gave her his hand to cross the stepping-stones. "What a fuss he'll make about our keeping the dinner back!"

"I have eaten all the caviare and the pickles, and nearly finished a bottle of Madeira, waiting for you," said Grog; "so, no dressing, but come in at once."

"Oh, dearest Lizzy!" cried Beecher, as they gained the porch, "just one word—only one word—to make me the happiest fellow in the world or the most miserable." But Lizzy sprang up the stairs, and was in her room almost ere his words were uttered.

"If I had had but another moment," muttered Beecher to himself, "just one moment more, I'd have shown her that I meant to turn over a new leaf—that I wasn't going to lead the life I have done. I'd have told her—though, I suppose, old Grog would murder me if he knew it—of our grand martingale, and how we mean to smash the Bank at Baden. No deception about that—no 'cross' there. She can't bring up grooms, and jockeys, and stable-helpers against me now. It will all be done amongst ourselves—a family party, and no mistake!"

All things considered, Annesley Beecher, it was just as well for you that you had not that "one moment" you wished for.

CHAPTER LXXXVII.

A DEAD HEAT.

SOME eight or ten days have elapsed since the scene we have just recorded—not one of whose incidents are we about to relate—and we are still at Holbach. As happens so frequently in the working of a mathematical question, proofs are assumed without going over the demonstrations; so, in real life—certain postulates being granted—we arrive at conclusions which we regard as inevitable.

We are at Holbach, but no longer strolling along its leaf-strewn alleys, or watching the laughing eddies of its circling river—we are within doors. The scene is a small, most comfortably-furnished chamber of the little inn, where an ample supper is laid out on a sideboard, a card-table occupying the centre of the room, at which two players are seated, their somewhat “charged” expressions and disordered dress indicating a prolonged combat, a fact in part corroborated by the streak of pinkish dawn that has pierced between the shutters, and now blends with the sickly glare of the candles. Several packs of cards litter the floor around them, thrown there in that superstitious passion only gamblers understand, and a decanter and some glasses stand on the table beside the players, who are no others than our acquaintances Grog Davis and Paul Classon.

There is a vulgar but not unwise adage that tells us “dogs do not eat dogs,” and the maxim has a peculiar application to gamblers. All sorts and manners of men love to measure their strength with each other—swordsmen, swimmers, pedestrians, even hard drinking used to have its duels of rivalry—gamblers never. Such an employment of their skill would seem to their eyes about as absurd as that of a sportsman who

would turn his barrel against his companion instead of the cock-pheasant before him. Their "game" is of another order. How, then, explain the curious fact we have mentioned? There are rivalries that last life-long; there are duels that go on from year to year of existence, and even to the last leave the question of superiority undetermined. The game of piquet formed such between these two men. At every chance meeting in life—no matter how long the interval or how brief the passage might be—they recurred to the old-vexed question, which Fortune seemed to find a pleasure in never deciding definitively. The fact that each had his own separate theory of the game, would have given an interest to the encounter, but besides there was now another circumstance whose import neither were likely to undervalue. Davis had just paid over to Paul Classon the sum of two hundred Napoleons—the price of a secret service he was about to perform—and the sight of that glowing heap of fresh gold—for there it lay on the corner of the table,—had so stimulated the acquisitiveness of Grog's nature that he could not resist the temptation to try and regain them. The certainty that when he should have won them it would only be to restore them to the loser, for whose expenses on a long journey they were destined, detracted nothing from this desire on his part. A more unprofitable debtor than Holy Paul could not be imagined. His very name in a schedule would reflect discredit on the bankruptcy! But there lay the shining pieces, fresh from the mint and glittering, and the appeal they made was to an instinct, not to reason. Was it with the knowledge of this fact that Paul had left them there instead of putting them up in his pocket? Had he calculated in his own subtle brain that temptations are least resistible when they are most tangible? There was that in his Reverence's look which seemed to say as much, and the thoughtless wantonness of his action as his fingers fiddled with the gold may not have been entirely without a purpose. They had talked together, and discussed some knotty matters of business, having concluded which, Davis proposed cards.

"Our old combat, I suppose?" said Paul, laughing. "Well, I'm always ready."

And down they sat, hour after hour finding them still in the same hard struggle, fortune swinging with its pendulous stroke from side to side, as though to elicit the workings of hope and fear in each, alternately. Meanwhile, they drank freely, and from time to time arose to eat at the side-table in that hurried and greedy way that only gamblers eat, as though vexed at the

hunger that called them from their game. They were both too great proficient in play to require that absorption of faculties inferior gamblers need. They could, and did, talk of everything that came uppermost, the terms of the game dropping through the conversation like the measured booming of great guns amid the clattering crash of musketry. Luck for some time had favoured Holy Paul, and while he became blander, softer, and more benign of look, Grog grew fierce, his eyes fiery, and his words sharp and abrupt. Classon's polished courtesy chafed and irritated him, but he seemed determined to control his anger as far as he might, and not give his adversary the transient advantage of temper. Had spectators been admitted to the lists, the backers would have most probably taken the Churchman. His calm countenance, his mild, unexcited eye, his voice so composed and gentle, must have made Paul the favourite.

"We shall scarcely have time for another game, Kit"—he'd have called him Grog, but that he was losing—"I perceive the day is beginning to break."

"So am I for the matter of that," said Davis, with a bitter laugh. "You have won—let me see—forty-six, and twenty-seven, and a hundred and twelve—that was a 'thumper'—and thirty-four, besides that loose cash there—about two hundred and forty or fifty Naps, Master Paul. A very pretty night's work, and more profitable than preaching, I take it."

"Regarding the matter as a mere monetary question——"

"No gammon—cut the cards," broke in Davis; "one game must finish us. Now, shall we say double or quits?"

"If you really wish me to speak my candid mind, I'd rather not."

"I thought as much," muttered Grog to himself; and then, in a louder voice, "What shall it be, then—one hundred and fifty? Come, even if you should loose, you'll get up winner of a clean hundred."

"Would that it were at the expense of some one I love less!"

"Answer my question," said Davis, angrily, "Will you have a hundred and fifty on the last game—yes or no?"

"Yes, of course, Kit, if you desire it."

"Cut again; there is a faced card," said Davis. And now he dealt with a slow deliberation that showed what an effort his forced composure was costing him.

Classon sat back in his chair watching the cards as they fell from the dealer's hand, but affecting in his half-closed eyes and folded arms the air of one deep in his own musings.

"I will say this, Davis," said he, at last, with the slow utterance that announces a well-matured thought, "you have managed the whole of this business with consummate skill; you have done it admirably."

"I believe I have," said Davis, with a sort of stern decision in his tone; "and there was more difficulty in the case than you are aware of."

"There must have been very considerable difficulty," rejoined Paul, slowly. "Even in the very little I have seen of him I can detect a man whose temperament must have presented the greatest embarrassments. He is proud—very proud—suspectful to any extent. I have five cards—forty seven."

"Not good."

"Three queens."

"Four tens."

"So, then, my tierce in spades is not good, of course. I play one."

"Fifteen and five twenty, and the tens ninety-four. The first honour I have scored this hour. The difficulty I allude to was with my daughter; she wouldn't have him."

"Not have him?—not accept a Peer of the realm?"

"Who told her he was a Peer? She only knows him as the Honourable Annesley Beecher."

"Even so. As the Honourable Annesley Beecher, he is a man of high connexions—related to some of the first people. A club—play a club. I take it that such a man is a very high mark indeed."

"*She* wasn't of your mind, that's clear," said Davis, abruptly; "nor do I believe it would have signified in the least to have told her that he *was* a Lord."

"Romantic!" muttered Paul.

"No, not a bit."

"Loved another, perhaps."

"How should she? She never saw any other except a one-eyed Pole, that taught her music at that Belgian school, and a sort of hairy dwarf that gave lessons in drawing! A hundred and seventeen. It's your deal."

"And he himself has no suspicion of his brother's death?" said Classon, as he gave out the cards.

"Not the slightest. He was trying to write a letter to him, to break the news of his marriage, only yesterday."

"Cleverly done—most cleverly done," said Paul, in ecstasy. "If he had come to the knowledge he might very possibly have refused her."

"I rather—suspect—not," said Grog, dwelling slowly on each word, while his countenance assumed an expression of fierce and terrible determination. "A lucky take in, that—the queen of diamonds: it ~~gives~~ me seven cards. Refuse her! by Heaven, he'd have had a short experience of his Peerage! Kings and knaves—six, and seven I play—twenty-three. Piqued again, Holy Paul! No, no; he'd never have dared that."

Classon shook his head doubtfully.

"You might just as well tell me, Paul Classon, that you'd refuse to marry them," said Davis, as he struck the table with his clenched fist, "and that I would bear it! I have a way of not being denied what I have determined on; that has done me good service in life. That blear-eyed boy—the Attaché at the Legation in Frankfort—wanted to refuse me a passport for the Honourable Annesley Beecher and Mrs. Beecher, saying that, until the marriage, there was no such person. But I whispered a word to him across the table, and he gave it, and there it is now."

"Going to Italy!" said Classon, as he read from the document which Grog had thrown down before him; "wonderful fellow—wonderful fellow—forgets nothing!" muttered he, to himself.

"Yes, but he does though; he has just forgotten four kings and suffered *you* to count four queens, Master Paul—a tribute to you agreeability somewhat too costly."

"Even to the travelling-carriage, Kit," resumed Classon, not heeding the sarcasm, "and a more complete thing I never saw in my life. You picked it up at Frankfort."

"Yes, at the Hôtel de Russie; got it for two thousand two hundred francs—it cost ~~ten, six months ago~~. A quint in spades, and the cards divided; I score thirty-one."

"And when is he to learn, that he has succeeded to the title?"

"When he's across the Alps—when he is out of the land of Rouge et Noir and Roulette; he may know it then, as soon as he pleases. I'm to join them at Como, or Milan, as I can't well 'show' at Baden, even at this late time of year. Before I come up he'll have heard all about Lackington's death."

"Will it ever occur to him, Kit, to suspect that you were aware of it?"

"I don't know; perhaps it may," said Grog, doggedly.

"If so, will the impression not lead to a very precarious state of relations between you?"

"Maybe so—seven hearts and five spades, you are 'capoted.' There, Paul, that doesn't leave so much between us 'after all. What if he does suspect it; the world suspects fifty things about me that no man has ever yet dared to lay to my charge. If you and I, Master Paul, were to fret ourselves about the suspicions that are entertained of us, we'd have a pleasant life of it. Your good health."

"To yours, my dear Kit; and may I never drink it in worse tippie would be the only additional pleasure I could suggest to the toast. It is wonderful Madeira!"

"I have had it in the London Docks since the year '31; every bottle of it now, seeing that the vines are ruined in the island, is worth from thirty shillings to five-and-thirty. I won it from Tom Hardiman; he took the invoice out of his pocket-book and flung it across the table to me. 'Grog,' says he, when you take it out of bond, mind you ask me to dinner, and give me a bottle of it?' But he's gone, 'toes up,' and so here's to his memory."

"'Drunk in solemn silence,' as the newspapers say," broke in Paul, as he drained his glass.

"Yes," said Davis, eyeing the wine by the light, "that's a tippie this little inn here is not much accustomed to see under its roof; but if I were to stay a little longer, I'd make something of this place. They never heard of Harvey's sauce, Chili vinegar, Caviare, Stilton; even Bass and British gin were novelties when I came. There, as well as I can make it up, you are a winner of fifteen Naps; there they are."

"Dear me, I fancied I stood safe to come off with a hundred!" said Paul, lugubriously.

"So you did, without counting the points; but you've lost five hundred and sixty-four—ay, and a right good thing you've made of it, Master Paul. I'd like to know how long it is since you earned such a sum honestly."

Classon sighed heavily as he swept the cash into his pocket, and said, "I'm unable to tell you; my memory grows worse every day."

"When you go back to England, you can always brush it up by the Police sheet—that's a comfort," said Davis, with a savage laugh.

"And what will the noble Viscount have to spend yearly?" asked Classon, to change the theme.

"Something between eight and ten thousand."

"A snug thing, Kit—a very snug thing indeed; and I take it that by this time o' day he knows the world pretty well."

"No; nothing of the kind!" said Grog, bluntly; "he's a fool, and must stay a fool!"

"The more luck his, then, to have Christopher Davis for his father-in-law."

"I'll tell you what's better still, Holy Paul—to have Lizzy Davis for his wife. *You* think she's going to make a great match of it because he's the Lord Viscount and she is *my* daughter; but *I* tell you, and I'm ready to maintain it too, I never met the man yet was worthy of her. There may be girls as handsome, though I never saw them—there may be others as clever, that I'm no judge of—but this I do know, that for pluck, real pluck, you'll not find her equal in Europe. She'd never have married him for his rank; no, if it was a Dukedom he had to offer her. She'd never have taken him for his fortune, if it had been ten times the amount. No, she wouldn't consent to it, even to take *me* out of my difficulties and set me all straight with the world, because she fancied that by going on the stage, or some such trumpery, she could have done that just as well. She'd not have had him for himself, for she knows he's a fool, just as well as I do. There was only one thing I found she couldn't get over: it was the thought that she *dare* not marry him; that to thrust herself into the station and rank *he* occupied, would be to expose herself to insults that must crush her. It was by a mere chance I discovered that this was a challenge, she'd have rather died than decline. It was for all the world like saying to myself, 'Don't you go into the ring there, Kit Davis; my Lords and the Gentlemen don't like it.' 'Don't they? Well, let's see how they'll *take* it, for I *am* a-going!' It was *that* stung her, Paul Classon. *She* didn't want all those fine people; *she* didn't care a brass farthing about their ways and their doings! *She'd* not have thought it a hard lot in life just to jog on as she is. She didn't want to be called a Countess, nor live like one; but when it was hinted to her, that if she *did* venture amongst them, it would be to be driven back with shame and insult, then her mind was made up at once. Not that she ever confessed as much to me; no, I found out her secret by watching her closely. The day I told her, I forget what anecdote about some outrageous piece of insolence played off on some new intruder into the titled class, she suddenly started as if something had stung her, and her eyes glared like a tiger's; then catching me by the hand, she said, 'Don't tell me these things; they pain me more to hear than real, downright calamities!' That was enough for *me*. I saw her cards, Paul, and I played through them!"

Classon heaved a deep sigh and was silent.

"What are you sighing over, Paul?" asked Davis, half crossly.

"I was just sorrowing to myself to think how little all her pluck will avail her."

"Stuff and nonsense, Sir! It is the very thing to depend on in the struggle."

"Ay, if there were a struggle, Kit, but that is exactly what there will not be. You, for instance, go into Brookes's to-morrow, you have been duly elected. It was a wet day, only a few at the ballot, and, somehow, you got in. Well, you are, to all intents, as much a member as his Grace there, or the noble Marquis. There's no commotion, no stir when you enter the room. The men at their newspapers look up, perhaps, but they read away immediately with only increased attention; the group at the window talks on, too; the only thing noticeable is that nobody talks to *you*. If you ask for the *Globe* or the *Chronicle*, when the reader shall have finished, he politely hands it at once, and goes away."

"If he did, I'd follow him——"

"What for?—to ask an explanation where there had been no offence? To make yourself at once notorious in the worst of all possible ways? There's nothing so universally detested as the man that makes a 'row;' witness the horror all well-bred people feel at associating with Americans, they're never sure how it's to end. Now, if all these considerations have their weight with men, imagine how they must be regarded by women, fifty times more exacting as they are in all the exigencies of station, and whose freemasonry is a hundred times more exclusive."

"That's all rot!" broke in Davis, his passion the more violent as the arguments of the other seemed so difficult to answer. "You think to puzzle *me* by talking of all these grand people and their ways as if they weren't all men and women. That they are, and a rum lot, too, some of them! Come," cried Davis, suddenly, as though a happy thought had just flashed across his mind, "it was the turn of a straw one day, by your own account, that you were not a Bishop. Now, I'd like to know, if that lucky event had really taken place, wouldn't you have been the same Holy Paul Classon that sits there?"

"Perhaps not, entirely," said Classon, in his oiliest of voices. "I trust that I should, in ascending to that exalted station have cast off the slough of an inferior existence, and carried up little of my former self except the friendships of my early years"

"Do you fancy, Master Paul, that gammon like this can impose upon a man of my sort?"

"My dear and worthy friend," rejoined Classon, "the tone in which I appeal to you is my tribute to your high ability. To an inferior man I had spoken very different language. Sentiments are not the less real that they are expressed with a certain embroidery, just as a Bank post-bill would be very good value though a Choctaw Indian might deem it a piece of waste paper."

"I'd like to see you try it on with Lizzy in this fashion," said Davis. "I don't think even your friend the Choctaw Indian would save you."

"I should be proud of even defeat at such hands!" exclaimed Paul, rapturously.

"You'd have little to be proud of when she'd have done with you," cried Grog, all his good-humour restored by the mere thought of his daughter.

"Have you spoken to his Lordship about what I mentioned?" said Paul, half diffidently.

"No," said Grog; "on reflection, I thought it better not. I'm sure, besides, that there's no Church preferment in his gift; and then, Classon, he knows *you*, as who does not?"

"*Quæ regio terræ non plena est?*" Ay, Grog, you and I have arrived at what the world calls, Fame."

"Speak for yourself, Sir; I acknowledge no partnership in the case. When I have written letters they have not been begging ones, and when I have stretched out my hand there was no pistol in the palm of it!"

"Very true, Kit; *I* never had a soul above petty larceny, and *you* had a spirit that aspired to transportation for life!"

Davis bounded on his chair, and glowered with a fearful stare at the speaker, who, meanwhile, drained the decanter into his glass with an unmoved serenity.

"Don't be angry, my ancient friend," said he, blandly. "The cares of friendship, like the skill of a surgeon, must often pain to be serviceable. Happy let us call ourselves when no ruder hand wields the probe or the bistoury!"

"Make an end of canting, I want to speak to you about matters of moment. You will set out to-day, I hope."

"Immediately after the marriage."

"What road do you take?"

"Strasburg, Paris, Marseilles, whence direct to Constantinople by the first steamer."

"After that?"

"Across the Black Sea to Balaklava."

"But when do you reach the Crimea?"

"Balaklava is *in* the Crimea."

Davis flushed scarlet. The reflection on his geography wounded him, and he winced under it.

"Are you quite clear that you understand my instructions?" said he, testily.

"I wish I was as sure of a Deanery," said Paul, smacking his lips over the last glass.

"You can scarcely wish over well to the Church, when you desire to be one of its dignitaries," said Davis, with a sarcastic grin.

"Why so, my worthy friend? There is a wise Scotch adage says, 'It taks a' kind of folk to mak a warld;' and so, various orders of men, with gifts widely differing, if not discrepant, are advantageously assembled into what we call corporations."

"Nonsense—bosh!" said Grog, impatiently. "If you have no better command of common sense where you are going, I have made a precious bad choice of an agent."

"See how men misconstrue their own natures!" exclaimed Classon, with a sort of fervour. "If any one had asked me what gift I laid especial claim to possess, I protest I should have said, 'common sense;' a little more common sense than any one else I ever met."

"You are modest, too."

"Becomingly so, I hope and believe."

"Have you any other remarkable traits that you might desire to record?"

"A few, and a very few," said Paul, with a well-assumed air of humility. "Nature has blessed me with the very best of tempers. I am never rash, hasty, or impetuous; I accept the rubs of life with submission; I think well of every one."

"Do you, faith!" exclaimed Davis, with a scornful laugh.

"Knowing well that we are all slaves of circumstances, I take motives where others demand actions, just as I would take a bill at three months from him who has no cash. It may be paid, or it may not."

"You'd have passed it ere it became due, eh, Master Paul?"

"Such is possible; I make no claims above human frailty."

"Is sobriety amongst your other virtues?"

"I rarely transgress its limits, save when alone. It is in the solitary retirement where I seek reflection that I occasionally

indulge. There I am—so to say—‘*Classo cum Classone.*’ I offer no example to others—I shock no outward decorum. If the instinctive appreciation of my character—which I highly possess—passes that of most men, I owe it to those undisguised moments when I stand revealed to myself. Wine keeps no secrets; and, Paul Classon drunk appeals to Paul Classon sober. Believe, me, Kit, when I tell you no man knows half the excellent things in his own heart till he has got tipsy by himself!”

“I wish I had never thought of you for this affair,” said Davis, angrily.

“Pitt made the same speech to Wolfe, and yet that young General afterwards took Quebec.”

“What do I care about Wolfe or Quebec? I want a particular service that a man of moderate brains and a firm purpose can accomplish.”

“And for which Paul Classon pledges himself with his head? Ay, Grog Davis, that is my bond.”

“The day you come back to me with proof of success, I hand you five hundred pounds.”

“Cash?”

“Cash—and more, if all be done to our entire satisfaction. *He*—here he jerked up his thumb towards Beecher’s room—*he* shan’t forget you.”

Paul closed his eyes, and muttered something to himself, ending with, “And ‘five pounds for the Cruelty to Animals—from the Reverend Paul Classon.’ I shall be in funds for them all.”

“Ah, Kit!” said he at last, with a deep-drawn sigh, “what slaves are we all, and to the meanest accidents, too—the veriest trifles of our existence. Ask yourself, I beseech you, what is it that continually opposes your progress in life—what is your rock ahead? Your name! nothing but your name!—call yourself Jones, Wilkins, Simpson, Watkins, and see what an expansion it will give your naturally fine faculties. Nobody will dare to assert that you or I are the same men we were five-and-twenty or thirty years ago, and yet *you* must be Davis and *I* must be Classon, whether we will or not. I call this hard—very hard indeed!”

“Would it be any benefit to me if I could call myself Paul Classon?” said Grog, with an insolent grin.

“It is not for the saintly man who bears that name to speak boastfully of its responsibilities——”

"In bills of exchange, I O U's, promissory notes, and so forth," laughed in Grog.

"I have, I own, done a little in these ways, but what gifted man ever lived who has not at some time or other committed his sorrows to paper; the misfortune in my case was that it was stamped."

"Do you know, Holy Paul, I think you are the greatest 'hemp' I ever met."

"No, Kit, don't say so—don't, my dear and valued friend; these words give me deep pain."

"I do say it, and I maintain it!"

"What good company you must have kept through life, then!"

"The worst of any man in England. And yet," resumed he, after a pause, "I'm positively ashamed to think that *my* daughter should be married by the Reverend Paul Classon."

"A prejudice, my dear and respected friend—a prejudice quite beneath your enlarged and gifted understanding! Will it much signify to you if he, who one of these days shall say, 'The sentence of this court, Christopher Davis, is transportation beyond the seas,' be a Justice of the Common Pleas or a Baron of the Exchequer? No, no, Kit; it is only your vain, conceited people who fancy that they are not hanged if it wasn't Calcraft tied the noose!"

More than once did Davis change colour at this speech, whose illustrations were selected with special intention and malice.

"Here's daybreak already!" cried Grog, throwing open the window, and admitting the pinkish light of an early dawn and the fresh sharp air of morning.

"It's chilly enough, too," said Classon, shivering, as he emptied the gin into his glass.

"I think you've had enough already," said Grog, rudely, as he flung both tumbler and its contents out of the window. "Go, have a wash, and make yourself a little decent-looking; one would imagine, to see you, you had passed your night in the 'lock-up!'"

"When you see me next you'll fancy I'm an archdeacon." So saying, and guiding himself by the chairs, Paul Classon left the room.

With a quiet step, and firm, neither "overtaken" by liquor nor fatigued by the night's debauch, Davis hastened to his chamber. So long as he was occupied with the cares of dressing his features betrayed no unusual anxiety; he did, indeed,

endeavour to attire himself with more than ordinary care, and one cravat after another did he fling on the floor, where a number of embroidered vests were already lying. At length the toilet was completed, and Grog surveyed himself in the large glass, and was satisfied. He knew he didn't look like Annesley Beecher and that "lot," still less did he resemble the old "swells" of Brookes's and the Carlton, but he thought there was something military, something sporting—a dash of the "nag," with "Newmarket"—about him, that might pass muster anywhere! "At all events, Lizzy won't be ashamed of me," muttered he to himself. "Poor, poor Lizzy!" added he, in a broken tone; and he sank down into a chair, and leaned his head on the table.

A gentle tap came to the door. "Come in," said he, without raising his head; and she entered.

As the rich robe of silk rustled across the floor he never raised his head, nor even when bending over she threw an arm around his neck and kissed his forehead, did he stir or move.

"I want you to look at me, dearest Papa," said she, softly.

"My poor Lizzy—my own dear Lizzy!" murmured he, half indistinctly; then, starting suddenly up, he cried aloud, "Good Heavens! is it worth all this——"

"No, indeed, Papa," burst she in; "it is *not*—it is *not* worth it!"

"What do you mean?" asked he, abruptly. "What were you thinking of?"

"It was *your* thoughts I was following out," said she, dearly.

"How handsome—how beautiful you are, girl!" exclaimed he, as holding both her hands he surveyed her at full length. "Is this Brussels lace?"

She nodded assent.

"And what do you call these buttons?"

"They are opals."

"How it all becomes you, girl! I'd never like to see you less smartly dressed! And now—and now I am to lose you!" And he fell upon her neck, and clasped her fondly to his heart.

"Oh, my dear father, if you knew——" She could not continue.

"And don't I know!" broke he in. "Do you think that all my hard, bad experience of life has left me so bereft of feeling! But I'll tell you another thing I know, Lizzy," said he, in a

deep, calm voice, "that what we fancy must break our hearts to do we can bear, and bear patiently, and, what's more, so learn to conform to, that after a few years of life we wonder that we ever thought them hardships!"

"We do not change so much without heavy suffering!" said she, sorrowfully.

"That is possible, too," said he sighing. Then suddenly rallying, he said, "You'll write to me often, very often, Lizzy; I'll want to hear how you get on with these great folk; not that I fear anything, only this, girl, that their jealousy will stimulate their rancour. You are so handsome, girl! so handsome!"

"I'm glad of it," said she, with an air of proud exultation.

"Who's there?" cried Davis, impatiently, as a sharp knock came to the door. It was the Reverend Paul come to borrow a white neckcloth, none of his own being sufficiently imposing for such an occasion.

"I am scarcely presentable, Miss Davis. I am sure I address Miss Davis," said he, pushing into the room, and bowing ceremoniously at each step. "There can be but only one so eminently beautiful!"

"There, take what you want, and be off!" cried Davis, rudely.

"Your father usurps all the privileges of long friendship, and emboldens me to claim some too, my dear young lady. Let me kiss the fairest hand in Christendom." And with a reverential homage all his own Paul bent down and touched her hand with his lips.

"This is the Reverend Paul Classon, Lizzy," said Davis, "a great dignitary of the Church, and an old schoolfellow of mine."

"I am always happy to know a friend of my father's," said she, smiling gracefully. "You have only just arrived?"

"This moment!" said he, with a glance towards Grog.

"There, away with you, and finish your dressing," broke in Davis, angrily; "I see it is nigh seven o'clock."

"Past seven, rather, and the company assembled below stairs, and Mr. Beecher—for I presume it must be he—pacing the little terrace in all the impatience of a bridegroom. Miss Davis, your servant." And with a bow of deep reverence Paul retired.

"There were so many things running in my mind to say to you, Lizzy," said Davis, "when that Classon came in." It was

very hard for him not to add an epithet, but he *did* escape that peril.

"I owe, Papa, he did not impress me very favourably."

"He's a first-rate man, a great scholar, a regular don amongst the shovel-hats," said Grog, hastily; "that man was within an ace of being a Bishop. But it was not of *him* my head was full, girl. I wanted to talk to you about Beecher and that haughty sister-in-law of his. *She'll* 'try it on' with you, Lizzy; I'm sure she will!"

"Dearest Papa, how often have you told me that in preparing for the accidents of life we but often exaggerate their importance. I'll not anticipate evil."

"Here's Beecher!—here he is!" cried Davis, as he clasped her once more to his heart; and then, opening the door, led her down the stairs.

There was a full assemblage of all the folk of the little inn, and the room was crowded. The landlord and his wife, and four buxom daughters and two sons, were there; and a dapper waiter, with very tight-fitting trousers, and a housemaid, and three farm-servants, all with big bouquets in their hands and huge bows of white ribbon on their breasts; and Mademoiselle Annette, Lizzy's maid, in a lilac silk and a white crape bonnet; and Peters, Beecher's man, in a most accurate blue frock, except his master, looking far more like a gentleman than any one there.

As for Annesley Beecher, no man ever more accurately understood how to "costume" for every circumstance in life, and whether you saw him lounging over the rail in Rotten-row, strolling through the Park at Richmond, sunning himself at Cowes, or yawning through a wet day in a country-house, his "get-up" was sure to be faultless. Hundreds tried in vain to catch the inimitable curl of his hat, the unattainable sweep of his waistcoat-collar; and then there were shades and tones of his colour about him that were especially his own. Of course, I am not about to describe his appearance on this morning; it is enough if I say that he bestowed every care upon it, and succeeded. And Paul—Holy Paul—how blandly imposing, how unctuously serene he looked! Marriage was truly a benediction at such hands. He faltered a little, his dulcet accents trembled with a modest reluctance, as he asked, "'Wilt thou take—this woman—'" Could he have changed the Liturgy for the occasion, he had said, "this angel;" as it was, his voice compensated for the syllables, and the question was breathed out like air from the Garden of Eden.

And so they were married, and there was a grand breakfast, where all the household were assembled, and where Paul Classon made a most effective little speech to "the health of the bride," interpolating his English and German with a tact all his own; and then they drove away with four posters, with all the noise and whip-cracking, the sighs and smiles, and last good-byes, just as if the scene had been Hanover-square, and the High Priest a Canon of Westminster!

CHAPTER LXXXVIII.

STUNNING TIDINGS.

A TELEGRAM duly despatched had prepared the hotel of the Cour de Bade for the arrival of the Honourable Annesley and Mrs. Beecher, and when the well-appointed travelling-carriage came clattering into the "porte cochère" at nightfall, there was a dress parade of landlord and waiters ready to receive them.

It was a very long time since Beecher had felt the self-importance of being deemed rich. For many a year back life had been but a series of struggles, and it was a very delightful sensation to him to witness once more all the ready homage, all the obsequious attention, which are only rendered to affluence. Herr Bauer had got the despatch just in time to keep his handsomest suite of rooms for him; indeed, he had "sent away the Margraf of Schweinerhausen, who wanted them." This was gratifying; and, limited as Beecher's German was, he could catch the muttered exclamations of "Ach Gott, wie schön!" "Wie lieblich!" as his beautiful wife passed up the stairs; and this, too, pleased him. In fact, his was just then the glorious mood that comes once in a lifetime to the luckiest of us—to be charmed with everything.

To enjoy the sunshine one must have sojourned in shadow, and certainly prosperity is never so entrancing as after some experience of its opposite, and Beecher was never wearied of admiring the splendour of the apartment, the wonderful promptitude of the waiters, and the excellence of everything. It must be owned the dinner was in Bauer's best style—the bisque, the raebraten, the pheasant, all that could be wished for; and when the imposing host himself uncorked a precious flask of a "Cabinet Steinberger," Beecher felt it was a very charming

world when one had only got to the sunny side of it. Mr. Bauer—a politeness rarely accorded, save to the highest rank—directed the service in person, and vouchsafed to be agreeable during the repast.

“And so your season was a good one, Bauer?” said Beecher.

“Reasonably so, your Excellency. We had the King of Wurtemberg, the Queen of Greece, a couple of Archdukes, and a Crown Prince of something far north—second-rate ones all, but good people, and easily satisfied.”

Beecher gave a significant glance towards Lizzy, and went on: “And who were your English visitors?”

“The old set, your Excellency; the Duke of Middleton, Lord Headlam and his four daughters, Sir Hipsley Keyling, to break the bank as usual——”

“And did he?”

“No, Excellency; it broke *him*.”

“Poor devil! it ain’t so easy to get to windward of those fellows, Bauer; they are too many for us, eh?” said Beecher, chuckling with the consciousness that *he* had the key to that mysterious secret.

“Well, Excellency, there’s nobody ever does it but one, so long as I have known Baden.”

“And who is he, pray?”

“Mr. Twining—Adderley Twining, Sir; that’s the man can just win what, and when, and how he pleases.”

“Don’t tell *me* that, Bauer; *he* hasn’t got the secret. If Twining wins, it’s chance, mere chance, just as you might win.”

“It may be so, your Excellency.”

“I tell you, Bauer—I know it as a *fact*—there’s just one man in Europe has the martingale, and here’s to his health.”

Mr. Bauer was too well skilled in his calling not to guess in whose honour the glass was drained, and smiled a gracious recognition of the toast.

“And your pretty people, Herr Bauer,” broke in Lizzy; “who were your great beauties this saason?”

“We had nothing remarkable, Madame,” said he, bowing.

“No, Master Bauer,” broke in Beecher; “for the luck and the good looks I suspect you should have gone somewhere else this summer.”

Bauer bowed his very deepest acknowledgment. Too conscious of what became him in his station to hazard a flattery in words, he was yet courtier enough to convey his admiration by a look of most meaning deference.

"I conclude that the season is nigh over," said Lizzy, half languidly, as she looked out on the moonlit promenade, where a few loungers were lingering.

"Yes, Madame; another week will close the rooms. All are hastening away to their winter quarters—Rome, Paris, or Vienna."

"How strange it is, all this life of change!" said Lizzy, thoughtfully.

"It is not what it seems," said Beecher, "for the same people are always meeting again and again, now in Italy, now in England. Ah! I see the Cursaal is being lighted up. How jolly it looks through the trees! Look yonder, Lizzy, where all the lamps are glittering. Many a sad night it cost me, gay as it appears."

Mr. Bauer withdrew as the dessert was placed on the table, and they were alone.

"Rich fellow that Bauer," said Beecher; "he lends more money than any Jew in Frankfort. I wonder whether I couldn't tempt him to advance me a few hundreds?"

"Do you want money, then?" asked she, unsuspectingly.

"Want it? no, not exactly, except that every one wants it; people always find a way to spend all they can lay their hands on."

"I don't call that wanting it," said she, half coldly.

"Play me something, Lizzy, here's a piano; that Sicilian song—and sing it." He held out his hand to lead her to the piano, but she only drew her shawl more closely around her, and never moved. "Or, if you like better, that Styrian dance," continued he.

"I am not in the humour," said she, calmly.

"Not in the humour? well be in the humour. I was never in better spirits in my life. I wouldn't change with Davis when he won the Czarewitch. Such a dinner as old Bauer gave us, and such wine! and then this coffee, not to speak of the company—eh, Lizzy?"

"Yes, Mr. Bauer was most agreeable."

"I wasn't talking of Mr. Bauer, *ma chère*, I was thinking of some one else."

"I didn't know," said she, with a half-weary sigh.

Beecher's cheek flushed up, and he walked to the window and looked out; meanwhile she took up a book and began to read. Along the alley beneath the window troops of people now passed towards the rooms. The hour of play had sounded, and the

swell of the band could be heard from the space in front of the Cursaal. As his eyes followed the various groups ascending the steps and disappearing within the building, his imagination pictured the scene inside.

There was always a kind of rush to the tables on the last few nights of the season. It was a sort of gamblers' theory that they were "lucky," and Beecher began to con over to himself all the fortunate fellows who had broken the bank in the last week of a season. "I told old Grog I'd not go," muttered he; "I pledged myself I'd not enter the rooms; but, of course, that meant I'd not play, it never contemplated mere looking in and seeing who was there; rather too hard if I were not to amuse myself particularly when"—here he turned a glance towards Lizzy—"I don't perceive any very great desire to make the evening pass pleasantly here. Ain't you going to sing?" asked he, half angrily.

"If you wish it," said she, coldly.

"Nor play?" continued he, as though not hearing her reply.

"If you desire it," said she, rising, and taking her place at the piano.

He muttered something, and she began. Her fingers at first strayed in half careless chords over the instrument: and then, imperceptibly, struck out into a wild, plaintive melody of singular feeling and pathos, one of those Hungarian airs, which, more than any other national music, seem to dispense with words for their expression.

Beecher listened for a few moments, and then, muttering indignantly below his breath, he left the room, banging the door as he went out. Lizzy did not seem to have noticed his departure, but played on, air succeeding air, of the same character and sentiment; but at last she leaned her head upon the instrument and fell into a deep reverie. The pale moonlight, as it lay upon the polished floor, was not more motionless. Beecher, meanwhile, had issued forth into the street, crossed the little rustic bridge, and held his way towards the Cursaal. His humour was not an enviable nor an amiable one. It was such a mood as makes a courageous man very dangerous company, but fills an individual of the Beecher type with all that can be imagined of suspicion and distrust. Every thought that crossed his mind was a doubt of somebody or something. He had been duped, cheated, "done," he didn't exactly know when, how, or by whom, with what object, or to what extent. But the fact was so. He entered the rooms and walked towards the play-table.

There were many of the old faces he remembered to have seen years ago. He exchanged bows and recognitions with several foreigners whose names he had forgotten, and acknowledged suitably the polite obeisance of the croupiers, as they rose to salute him. It was an interesting moment as he entered, and the whole table were intently watching the game of one player, whose single Louis d'or had gone on doubling with each deal, till it had swelled into a sum that formed the limit of the bank. Even the croupiers, models as they are of impassive serenity, showed a touch of human sentiment as the deal began, and seemed to feel that they were in presence of one who stood higher in Fortune's favour than themselves.

"Won again!" cried out a number of voices; "the thirteenth pass! who ever saw the like! It is fabulous, monstrous!" Amid the din of incessant commentaries, few of them uttered in the tone of felicitation, a very tall man stretched his arm towards the table, and began to gather in the gold, saying in a pleasant, but hurried voice, "A thousand pardons. I hope you'll excuse me; wouldn't inconvenience you for worlds. I think you said"—this was to the banker—"I think you said thirty-eight thousand francs in all; thank you, extremely obliged—a very great run of luck indeed—never saw the like before. Would you kindly exchange that note, it is a Frankfort one? quite distressed to give you the trouble—ininitely grateful;"—and, bashfully sweeping the glittering coins into his hat, as if ashamed to have interrupted the game, he retired to a side-table to count over his winnings. He had just completed a little avenue of gold columns, muttering to himself little congratulations, interspersed with "What fun!" when Beecher, stepping up, accosted him. "The old story, Twining! I never heard nor read of a fellow with such luck as yours!"

"Oh, very good luck, capital luck!" cried Twining, rubbing his lean hands, and then slapping them against his leaner legs. "As your Lordship observes, I do occasionally win; not always, not always, but occasionally. Charmed to see you here—delighted—what fun! Late—somewhat late in the season—but still lovely weather. Your Lordship only just arrived I suppose?"

"I see you don't remember me, Twining," said Beecher, smiling, and rather amused to mark how completely his good fortune had absorbed his attention.

"Impossible, my Lord!—never forget a face—never!"

"Pardon me if I must correct you this once, but it is quite

clear you *have* forgotten me. Come, for whom do you take me?"

"Take you, my Lord—take you? Quite shocked if I could make a blunder, but really I feel certain I am speaking with Lord Lackington."

"There, I knew it!" cried Beecher, laughing out. "I knew it—though, by Jove! I was not quite prepared to hear that I looked so old. You know he's about eighteen years my senior."

"So he was, my Lord—so he was," said Twining, gathering up his gold. "And, for a moment, I own I was disposed to distrust my eyes, not seeing your Lordship in mourning."

"In mourning, and for whom?"

"For the late Viscount, your Lordship's brother!"

"Lackington! Is Lackington dead?"

"Why, it's not possible your Lordship hasn't heard it? It cannot be that your letters have not brought you the tidings? It happened six—ay, seven weeks ago—and I know that her Ladyship wrote, urgently entreating you to come out to Italy." Twining continued to detail in his own peculiar and fitful style various circumstances about Lord Lackington's last illness. But Beecher never heard a word of it, but stood stunned and stupified by the news. It would be too tangled a web were we to inquire into the complicated and confused emotions which then swayed his heart. The immense change in his own fortunes, his sudden accession to rank, wealth, and station, came accompanied by traits of brotherly love and affection bestowed on him long, long ago, when he was a Harrow boy, and "Lack" came down to see him; and then, in after life, the many kind things he had done for him—helping him out of this or that difficulty—services little estimated at the time, but now remembered with more than mere gratitude. "Poor Lackington! and that I should not have been with you!" muttered he; and then, as if the very words had set another chord in vibration, he started as he thought that he had been duped. Davis knew it all—Davis had intercepted the letters. It was for this he had detained him weeks long in the lonely isolation of that Rhenish village. It was for this his whole manner had undergone such a marked change to him. Hence the trustfulness with which he burned the forged acceptances—the liberality with which he supplied him with money, and then—the marriage! "How they have done me!" cried he, in an agony of bitterness—"how they have done me! The whole thing was concerted—a plant from the very beginning—and *she* was in it!" While he thus continued

to mutter to himself imprecations upon his own folly, Twining led him away, and imperceptibly induced him to stroll along one of the unfrequented alleys. At first, Beecher's questions were all about his brother's illness—how it began—what they called it—how it progressed. Then he asked after his sister-in-law—where she then was, and how. By degrees he adverted to Lackington's affairs; his will—what he had left, and to whom. Twining was one of the executors, and could tell him everything. The Viscount had provided handsomely, not extravagantly, for his widow, and left everything to his brother! "Poor Lackington, I knew he loved me, always!" Twining entered into a somewhat complicated narrative of a purchase the late Viscount had made, or intended to make, in Ireland—an encumbered estate—but Beecher paid no attention to the narrative. All his thoughts were centred upon his own position, and how Davis had done him.

"Where could you have been, my Lord, all that time, not to have heard of this?" asked Twining.

"I was in Germany, in Nassau. I was fishing amongst the mountains," said the other, in confusion.

"Fishing?—great fun, capital fun—like it immensely—no expense, rods and hooks—rods and hooks; not like hunting—hunting perfectly ruinous—I mean for men like myself, not of course for your Lordship."

"Poor Lackington!" muttered Beecher, half unconsciously.

"Ah!" sighed Twining, sympathetically.

"I was actually on my way out to visit him, but one thing or another occurred to delay me!"

"How unfortunate, my Lord; and, really, his anxieties about *you* were unceasing. You have not to be told of the importance he attached to the title and name of your house! He was always saying, 'If Beecher were only married! If we could find a wife for Annesley——'"

"A wife!" exclaimed the other, suddenly.

"Yes, my Lord, a wife; excellent thing, marriage—capital thing—great fun!"

"But it's done, Sir—I'm booked!" cried Beecher, vehemently. "I was married on Sunday last."

"Wish your Lordship every imaginable joy. I offer my felicitations on the happy event. Is the Viscountess here?"

"She is here," said Beecher, with a dogged sternness.

"May I ask the name of Lady Lackington's family?" said Twining, obsequiously.

"Name—name of her family!" echoed Beecher, with a scornful laugh. Then, suddenly stopping, he drew his arm within Twining's, and in the low voice of a secret confidence, said: "You know the world as well as most men—a deal better, I should say—now, can you tell me, is a marriage of this kind binding?"

"What kind of marriage do you mean?"

"Why, a private marriage in an inn, without bans, license, or publication of any kind, the ceremony performed by a fellow I suspect is a degraded parson—at least, I used to hear he was 'scratched' years ago—Classon."

"Paul Classon—Holy Paul?—clever fellow, very ingenious. Tried to walk into me once for a subscription to convert the Mandans Indians—didn't succeed—what fun!"

"Surely no ministration of his can mean much, eh?"

"Afraid it does, my Lord; as your late brother used to observe, marriage is one of those bonds in which even a rotten string is enough to bind us. Otherwise, I half suspect some of us would try to slip our cables—slip our cables and get away! What fun, my Lord—what fun!"

"I don't believe such a marriage is worth a rush," went on Beecher, in that tone of affirmation by which he often stimulated his craven heart to feel a mock confidence. "At least, of this I am certain, there are five hundred fellows in England would find out a way to smash it."

"And do you want to 'cry off,' my Lord?" asked Twining, abruptly.

"I might or I might not, that depends. You see, Twining, there's rather a wide line of country between Annesley Beecher with nothing, and Viscount Lackington with a snug little estate, and if I had only known last Sunday morning that I was qualified to run for a cup, I'd scarcely have entered for a hack stakes."

"But then you are to remember her connexions."

"Connexions!" laughed out Beecher, scornfully.

"Well, family—friends; in short, she may have brothers—a father?"

"She *has* a father, by Jove!—she *has* a father!"

"May I be so bold as to ask——?"

"Oh, you know him well!—all the world knows him, for the matter of that. What do you say to Kit Davis—Grog!"

"Grog Davis, my Lord!—Grog Davis!"

"Just so," said Beecher, lighting a cigar with an affected composure he intended to pass off for great courage.

"Grog—Grog—Grog!—wonderful fellow! astonishing fellow! up to everything! and very amusing! I must say, my Lord—I must say, your Lordship's father-in-law is a very remarkable man."

"I rather suspect he is, Twining."

"Under the circumstances—the actual circumstances—I should say, my Lord, keep your engagement—keep your engagement."

"I understand you, Twining; you don't fancy Master Grog. Well, I know an opinion of that kind is abroad. Many people are afraid of him, I never was, eh?" The last little interrogative was evoked by a strange smile that flickered across Twining's face. "You suspect that I *am* afraid of him, Twining; now, why should I?"

"Can't possibly conceive, my Lord—cannot imagine a reason."

"He is what is called a dangerous fellow."

"Very dangerous."

"Vindictive."

"To the last. Never abandons a pursuit, they tell me."

"But we live in an age of civilisation, Twining. Men of his stamp can't take the law in their own hands."

"I'm afraid that is exactly the very thing they do, my Lord; they contrive always to be in the wrong, and consequently have everything their own way;" and so Mr. Twining rubbed his hands, slapped his legs, and laughed away very pleasantly.

"You are rather a Job's comforter, Twining," said Beecher, *truly*.

"Not very like Job, your Lordship; very little resemblance, I must say, my Lord! Much more occasion for pride than patience—peerage and a fine property!"

"I'm sure I never coveted it; I can frankly say I never desired prosperity at the price of—the price of——By the way, Twining, why not compromise this affair. I don't see why a handsome sum—I'm quite willing it should be handsome—wouldn't put all straight. A clever friend might be able to arrange the whole thing. Don't you agree with me?"

"Perfectly, my Lord—quite convinced you have taken the correct view."

"Should you feel any objection to act for me in the matter—I mean, to see Davis?"

Twining winced like a man in pain.

"Why, after all, it is a mere negotiation."

"Very true, my Lord."

"A mere experiment."

"Just so, my Lord; so is proving a new cannon; but I'd just as soon not sit on the breech for the first fire."

"It's wonderful how every one is afraid of this fellow, and I wind him round my finger!"

"Tact, my Lord—tact and cleverness, that's it."

"You see, Twining," said Beecher, confidentially, "I'm not quite clear that I'd like to be off. I haven't regularly made up my mind about it. There's a good deal to be said on either side of the question. I'll tell you what to do: come and breakfast with us to-morrow morning—I'd say dine, but I mean to get away early and push on towards the south—you shall see her, and then—and then we'll have a talk afterwards."

"Charmed, my Lord—delighted—too happy. What's your hour?"

"Let us say eleven. Does that suit you?"

"Perfectly; any hour—eleven, twelve, one—whenever your Lordship pleases."

"Well, good night, Twining, good night."

"Good night, my Lord, good night. What fun," muttered he, slapping his legs as he stepped out to his lodgings.

It was not till he had smoked his fourth cigar, taking counsel from his tobacco, as was his wont, that the new Viscount returned to his hotel. It was then nigh morning, and the house was so buried in sleep that he knocked full half an hour before he gained admittance.

"There's a gentleman arrived, Sir, who asked after you. He didn't give his name.

"What is he like—old, young, short, or tall?"

"Middle aged, Sir, and short, with red beard and moustaches. He drank tea with the lady upstairs, Sir, and waited to see you till nigh two o'clock."

"Oh, I know him," muttered Beecher, and passed on. When he reached his dressing-room, he found the table covered with a mass of letters addressed to Lord Viscount Lackington, and scrawled over with postmarks, but a card, with the following few words, more strongly engaged his attention: "It's all right, you are the Viscount.—C. D.

A deep groan burst from Beecher as he dropped the card and sank heavily into a seat. A long, long time slipped over ere he

could open the letters and examine their contents. They were almost all from lawyers and men of business, explanation of formalities to be gone through, legal details to be completed, with here and there respectful entreaties to be continued in this or that agency. A very bulky one was entirely occupied with a narrative of the menaced suit on the title, and a list of the papers which would be hereafter required for the defence. It was vexatious to be told of a rebellion ere he had yet seated himself on the throne, and so he tossed the ungracious document to the end of the room, his mood the very reverse of that he had so long pictured to himself it might be.

"I suppose it's all great luck!" muttered he to himself; "but up to this I see no end of difficulty and trouble."

CHAPTER LXXXIX.

UNPLEASANT EXPLANATIONS.

BEECHER had scarcely dropped off to sleep when he was awoken by a heavy, firm tread in the room; he started up, and saw it was Davis.

"How is the noble Viscount?" said Grog, drawing a chair and seating himself. "I came over here post haste when I got the news."

"Have you told her?" asked Beecher, eagerly.

"Told her! I should think I have. Was it not for the pleasure of that moment that I came here—here, where they could arrest me this instant and send me off to the fortress of Rastadt? I shot an Austrian officer in the garrison there four years ago?"

"I heard of it," groaned Beecher, from the utmost depth of his heart. "So that she knows it all?"

"She knows that you are a Peer of England, and that she is a Peeress."

Beecher looked at the man as he spoke, and never before did he appear to him so insufferably insolent and vulgar. Traits which he had in part forgotten or overlooked, now came out in full force, and he saw him in all the breadth of his coarseness. As if he had read what was passing in Beecher's mind, Davis stared fully at him, resolute and defiant.

"I suppose," resumed Grog, "it was a pleasure you had reserved for yourself to inform her Ladyship of her step in rank, but I thought she'd just like to hear the news as well from her father."

Beecher made no answer, but sat buried in thought; at last he said: "Mr. Twining, whom I met accidentally last night, told me of my brother's death, and told me, besides, that it had occurred fully eight weeks ago."

"So long as that!" said Davis, dryly.

"Yes, so long as that," said Beecher, fixing his eyes steadfastly on the other. "He tells me, too, that Lady Lackington wrote twice, or even thrice, to urge me to come on to Italy; that my arrival was looked for hourly. Many other letters were also sent after me, but not one reached my hand. Strange, very strange!"

"I suppose you have them all there now," said Grog, defiantly, as he pointed to the mass of letters on the dressing-table.

"No, these are all of recent dates, and refer, besides, to others which I have never got."

"What has become of the others, then?" asked Grog, resolutely.

"That's the very point *I* cannot decide, and it is the very question I was about to ask of *you*."

"What do you mean?" said Grog, calmly.

"What I mean is this," said Beecher, "that I am curious to learn how long it is since you knew of my brother's death?"

"If you'd like to hear when I suspected that fact, perhaps I can tell you," said Grog.

"Well, let me hear so much."

"It was shortly after your arrival at Holbach."

"Ah! I thought so—I thought as much!" cried Beecher, triumphantly.

"Wait a bit—wait a bit; don't be sure you have won the game, I've a card in my hand yet. When you endorsed certain large bills for Lazarus Stein at Aix, you signed your name 'Lackington.' Oh, there's no denying it, I have them here in this pocket-book. Now, either your brother was dead, or you committed a forgery."

"You know well, Sir," said Beecher, haughtily, "at whose instance and persuasion I wrote myself 'Lackington.'"

"I know it! I know nothing about it. But before we carry this controversy further, let me give you a hint: drop this haughty tone you have just taken with me—it won't do—I tell you it won't. If you're the Lord Viscount to the world, you know deuced well what you are to me, and what, if you push me to it, I could make you to *them*."

"Captain Davis, I am inclined to think that we had better come to an understanding at once," said Beecher, with a degree of firmness he could rarely assume. "Our relations cannot be what they have hitherto been. I will no longer submit to dictation nor control at your hands. Our roads in life lie in opposite

directions; we need seldom to meet, never to cross each other. If Lady Lackington accepts the same view of these matters as myself, well; if not, it will not be difficult to suggest an arrangement satisfactory to each of us."

"And so you think to come the noble Lord over *me*, do you?" said Grog, with an irony perfectly savage in look and tone. "I always knew you were a fool, but that you could carry your stupid folly that far I never imagined. You want to tell me—if you had the pluck you would tell me—that you are ashamed of having married *my* daughter, and I tell *you*, that out of your whole worthless, wretched, unmanly life, it is the one sole redeeming action. That *she* stooped to marry *you* is another matter—she that, at this very moment, confers more honour upon your rank than it can ever bestow upon *her*! Ay! start if you will, but don't sneer, for if you do, by the eternal Heaven above us, it will be the last laugh you'll ever indulge in!" A sudden movement of his hand towards the breast of his coat gave such significance to the words that Beecher sprang from his seat and approached the bell-rope. "Sit down there—there, in that chair," cried Grog, in the thickened accents of passion. "I haven't done with you. If you call a servant into the room I'll fling *you* out of the window. If you imagined, when I burned your forged acceptances, that I hadn't another evidence against you stronger than all, you mistook Kit Davis. What! did you think to measure yourself against *me*? Nature never meant you for that, my Lord Viscount—never!"

If Davis was carried away by the impetuosity of his savage temper in all this, anger never disabled him from keenly watching Beecher and scanning every line in his face. To his amazement, therefore, did he remark that he no longer exhibited the same extent of fear he had hitherto done. No, he was calmer and more collected than Grog had ever seen him in a moment of trial.

"When your passion has blown over," said Beecher, quietly, "you will perhaps tell me what it is you want or require of me."

"Want of you—want of you!" reiterated Davis, more abashed by the other's demeanour than he dared to confess, even to himself—"what can *I* want of you? or, if I do want anything, it is that you will remember who you are, and who am I. It is not to remember that you are a Lord, and I a Leg—it is not that I mean—you're not very like to forget it; it is to call to mind that I have the same grip of you I have had any

day these ten years, and that I could show up the Viscount Lackington just as easily as the Honourable Annesley Beecher."

If Beecher's cheek grew paler, it was only for a moment, and, with an amount of calm dignity of which Grog had not believed him capable, he said:

"There's not any use in your employing this language towards me—there's not the slightest necessity for me to listen to it. I conclude, after what has passed between us, we cannot be friends: there's no need, however, of our being enemies."

"Which means, 'I wish you a very good morning, Kit Davis,' don't it?" said Grog, with a grin.

Beecher gave a smile that might imply anything.

"Ah! so that's it?" cried Davis, endeavouring, by any means to provoke a reply.

Beecher made no answer, but proceeded in most leisurely style with his dressing.

"Well, that's candid, anyhow," said Grog, sternly. "Now, I'll be as frank with *you*: I thought a few days back that I'd done rather a good thing of it, but I find that I backed the wrong horse after all. You are the Viscount now, but you won't be so this day six months."

Beecher turned his head round, and gave a smile of the most insolent incredulity.

"Ay, I know you'll not believe it, because it is I that tell you; but there came out a fellow from Fordyce's with the same story, and when you open your letters you'll see it again."

Beecher's courage now deserted him, and the chair on which he leaned shook under his grasp.

"Here's how it is," said Grog, in a calm, deliberate tone: "Dunn—that same fellow we called on one day together—has fallen upon a paper—a title, or a patent, or a writ, or something—that shows you have no claim to the Viscounty, and that it ought to go, along with the estates, to some man who represents the elder branch. Now Dunn, it seems, was someway deep with your brother. He had been buying land for him, and not paying, or paying the money and not getting the land—at all events, he wasn't on the square with him; and seeing that you might probably bring him to book, he just says, 'Don't go into accounts with me, and here's your title; give me any trouble, and I'll go over to the enemy.'"

"But there can be no such document."

"Fordyce's people say there is. Hankses, Dunn's own agent,

told them the substance of it; and it seems it was on the list of proofs, but they never could lay a hand on it."

Beecher heard no more, but taking up the lawyer's letter which he had thrown so indignantly from him the night before, he began patiently to read it.

"Who can make head or tail of all this?" cried he, in angry impatience. "The fellow writes as if I was a scrivener's clerk, and knew all their confounded jargon. Mere schemes to extort money these."

"Not always. There's now and then a real charge in the gun, and it's too late to know it when you're hit," cried Grog, quickly.

"Why do not Fordyce's people send out a proper person to communicate with myself directly," said Beecher, haughtily.

"They did, and I saw him," said Grog, boldly.

Beecher grew crimson, and his lip trembled with a convulsive movement. It was very hard indeed to restrain himself, but, with an effort, he succeeded, and simply said, "And then——"

"And then," resumed Davis, "I packed him off again."

"What authority had you to thrust yourself forward in this manner?" cried Beecher, passionately.

"What authority?—the interest of my daughter, the Viscountess Lackington," said Grog, with a mingled insolence and mockery. "You may safely swear it was out of no special regard for *you*. What authority?" And with this he burst out into a laugh of sarcastic defiance.

"It need not offend you," said Beecher, "if I say that a question like this must be entrusted to very different hands from yours."

"You think so, eh?"

"I'm sure of it."

"Well, I am not; so far from it, that I'm ready to declare if I can't pull you through, there's not that man living who can. Lawyers can meet lawyers. If one wins a trick here, the other scores one there. This fellow has a deed—that one has a codicil. It is always the same game; and they're in no hurry to finish, for they are playing on velvet. What's really wanting is some one that doesn't care a rush for a little risk—ready to bribe this man—square the other—burn a parish register, if need be, and come at—at any document that may be required—at the peril of passing his days at Norfolk Island."

"You fancy that the whole world is like the ring at Ascot," said Beecher, sneeringly.

"And ain't it? What's the difference, I'd like to know? Is it noble Lords, like yourself would prove the contrary?"

"I will see Fordyce myself," said Beecher, coldly.

"You needn't be at the trouble," said Davis, calmly. "There's two ways of doing the thing: one is a compromise with the claimant, who turns out to be that young Conway, the 'Smasher.'"

"Young Conway, the one-armed fellow?"

"Just so. The other is, to get hold of Dunn's papers. Now, I have despatched a trusty hand to the Crimea to see about the first of these plans. As for the other, I'll do it myself."

"How so?"

"Just this way: you shall give me a written authority to demand from Dunn all your family papers and documents, making me out to be your agent for the Irish estates." Beecher started, and a slight cast of derision marked his lip; but there was that in Grog's face that speedily suppressed every temptation to sneer, and he grew sick with terror. "Dunn will be for holding out," resumed Davis. "He'll be for writing to yourself for explanations, instructions, and so forth; and if I were a fellow of his own sort, I'd have to agree; but, being what I am—Kit Davis, you see—I'll just say, 'No gammon, my old gent. We don't mean to lose this match, nor don't mean to let *you* nobble *us*. Be on the square, and it will be all the better for yourself.' *We'll* soon understand each other."

A gentle tap at the door here interrupted Davis, and Beecher's servant, with a most bland voice, said: "Her Ladyship is waiting breakfast, my Lord," and disappeared.

"Who told *him*?" asked Beecher, a strange sense of pleasure vibrating through him as this recognition reminded him of his newly acquired station.

"I told him last night," said Davis, with a look that seemed to say, "And of whatever *I* do, let there be no further question."

As they entered the breakfast-room, they found Lizzy—I must ask pardon if I return at times to their former names in speaking of her and her husband—in conversation with Mr. Twining, that gentleman having presented himself, and explained how he came to be there.

"Do you know Captain Davis, Twining? Let me present him to you," said Beecher, blushing deeply as he spoke.

"Charmed, my Lord—much honoured—fancy we have met

before—met at York Spring Meet. Rataplan beat by a neck—great fun!”

“It wasn’t great fun for me,” growled out Grog; “I stood to win on Bruiser.”

“Excellent horse—capital horse—wonderful stride!”

“I’ll tell you what he was,” said Grog, sternly—“a rare bad ‘un!”

“You surprise—amaze me, Captain Davis—quite astonish me! Always heard a great character of Bruiser!”

“You did, did you?” said Grog, with a jocose leer. “Well, the information wasn’t thrown away, for you laid heavily against him.”

“Most agreeable man, your father-in-law, my Lord,” said Twining, slapping his legs and laughing away in high good humour; then, turning again to Davis, he engaged him in conversation.

Meanwhile, Beecher had drawn Lizzy into a recess of the window, and was whispering anxiously to her.

“Did this piece of news take you by surprise?” asked he, scanning her closely as he spoke.

“Yes,” said she, calmly.

“It was quite unexpected,” said he, half in question—“at least by *me*,” added he, after a pause.

She saw that some suspicion—she knew not of what, and as possibly cared as little—agitated him, and she turned away to the breakfast-table without speaking. Beecher, however, led her back again to the window. “I’d like much to ask you a question,” said he, half timidly; “that is, if I did not fear you might take it ill.”

“And there is such a risk, is there?” asked she.

“Well—it is just possible,” faltered he.

“In that case, take my advice, and do not hazard it.” There was a calm resolution in her tone that carried more weight with it than anything like passion, and Beecher felt in his heart that he dared not reject her counsel.

Lizzy had now taken her place at the breakfast-table, her air, look, and manner being all that could denote a mind perfectly easy and contented. So consummate, too, was her tact, that she gradually led the conversation into that tone of pleasant familiarity when frank opinions are expressed and people talk without restraint; and thus, without the semblance of an effort, she succeeded, while developing any agreeability Beecher possessed, in silencing her father, whose judgment of men and

events were not always the safest. As for Twining, she perfectly fascinated him. He was no mean critic in all that regards dress and manners; few men could more unerringly detect a flaw in breeding or a solecism in address. Mere acting, however good, would never have imposed upon him, and all the polish of manner and the charm of a finished courtesy would have failed with him if unaccompanied by that "sentiment" of good breeding which is its last and highest captivation. How subdued was all the flippant mockery of his manner! how respectful the tone in which he accosted her! It was the Viscountess, and not Grog Davis's daughter, he saw before him. Now Beecher saw all this, and a sense of pride swelled his heart, and made him almost forget his distrusts and suspicions. When breakfast was over, Lizzy, passing her arm within her father's, led him away. She had many things to say to him, and he to her, so that Beecher and Twining were left alone together.

"Well, Twining," said Annesley, as he lighted a cigar, "tell me frankly—don't you think I might have done worse?"

"Impossible to have done better—impossible!" said Twining. "I don't speak of her Ladyship's beauty, in which she surpasses all I have ever seen, but her manner—her courtesy—has a blending of grace and dignity that would confer honour on the most finished Court in Europe."

"I'm glad you say so, Twining; men quote *you* as an authority on these things, and I own frankly I am delighted to have my own judgment so ratified."

"Her appearance in the world will be such a success as one has not seen for years!" exclaimed Twining.

"She'll be sharply criticised," said Beecher, puffing his cigar.

"She can well afford it, my Lord."

"What will the women say, Twining? She is *so* good-looking—what will the women say?"

"Where there's no rivalry, there will be no dispraise. She is so surpassingly beautiful that none will have courage to criticise; and if they should, where can they detect a fault?"

"I believe you are right, Twining—I believe you are right," said Beecher, and his face glowed with pleasure as he spoke. "Where she got her manners I can't make out," added he, in a whisper.

"Ay, my Lord, these are Nature's own secrets, and she keeps them closely."

"It is the father—old Grog—is the difficulty," whispered Beecher, still lower; "what can be done with *him*?"

"Original, certainly; peculiar—very peculiar—what fun!" And Twining in an instant recovered all his wonted manner, and slapped away at his legs unmercifully.

"I don't exactly see the fun of it—especially for *me*," said Beecher, peevishly.

"After all, a well-known man, my Lord—public character—a celebrity, so to say."

"Confound it!" cried Beecher, angrily, "don't you perceive there lies the whole annoyance? The fellow is known from one end of England to the other. You can't enter a club of a rainy day, when men sit round the fire, without hearing a story of him; you don't get to the third station on a railroad till some one says, 'Have you heard old Grog's last?' There's no end to him!"

"Wonderful resources!—astonishing!—great fun!"

"I'll be hanged if it *is* great fun, though you are pleased to say so," said Beecher, angrily.

Twining was far too good-tempered to feel hurt by this peevishness, and only rubbed his hands and laughed joyfully.

"And the worst of all," resumed Beecher—"the worst of all is, he *will* be a foreground figure; do what you may, he *will* be in the front of the Stand-house."

"Get him a situation abroad, my Lord—something in the colonies," broke in Twining.

"Not a bad thought that, Twining; only he is so notorious."

"Doesn't signify in the least, my Lord. Every office under the Crown has its penal settlements. The Foreign Office makes its culprits Consuls; the Colonial sends their Chief Justices to the Gold Coast; and the Home Secretary's Botany Bay is Ireland."

"But would they really give me something—I mean something he'd take?"

"I haven't a doubt of it, my Lord; I wanted to get rid of a poor relation t'other day, and they made him a Boundary Commissioner at Baffin's Bay. Baffin's Bay!—what fun!" And he laughed immoderately.

"How am I to set about this, Twining?" You are aware that up to this I have had no relations with politics or parties."

"Nothing easier, my lord; always easy for a Peer—proxy often of great consequence. Write to the Premier—hint that you are well disposed to adopt his views—due maintenance of all the glorious privileges of our Constitution, with progressive improvement—great fun, capital fun!—all the landmarks firm

and fixed, and as much of your neighbour's farm as possible. Or if you don't like to do this, set Davenport Dunn at them; he is your Lordship's Irish agent—at least, he was the late Viscount's—he'll do it—none better, none so well!"

"That might be the best way," said Beecher, musing.

"He'll be charmed—delighted—overjoyed at this proof of your Lordship's confidence. He'll go to work at once, and before your Lordship begins to receive, or go out, your amiable and most highly gifted father-in-law may be Income-tax Collector in Cochin-China."

"Now, there's only one thing more, Twining, which is, to induce Davis to agree to this. He likes Europe—likes the life of England and the Continent."

"Certain he does—quite sure of it; no man more calculated to appreciate society or adorn it. Capital fun!"

"Do you think," resumed Beecher, "that you could just throw out a hint—a slight suggestion—to see how he'd take it?"

"Come much better from your Lordship."

"Well, I don't know—that is, I half suspect——"

"Far better, infinitely better, my Lord; your own tact, your Lordship's good taste——Oh dear me, one o'clock already, and I have an appointment!" And with the most profuse apologies for a hurried departure, and as many excuses to be conveyed to her Ladyship, Mr. Twining disappeared.

Although Twining's reluctance to carry into execution the tone of policy he suggested did not escape Beecher's penetration, the policy itself seemed highly recommendable. Grog out of Europe—Grog beyond the seas, collecting taxes, imprisoning skippers, hunting runaway negroes, or flogging Caffres, it mattered not, so that he never crossed his sight again. To be sure, it was not exactly the moment to persuade Davis to expatriate himself when his prospects at home began to brighten, and he saw his daughter a Peeress. Still, Dunn was a fellow of such marvellous readiness, such astonishing resources! if any man could "hit off" the way here, it was he. And then, how fortunate! Grog was eagerly pressing Beecher to be accredited to this same Davenport Dunn, he asked that he might be sent to confer and negotiate with him about the pending action at law. What an admirable opportunity was this, then, for Dunn to sound Davis, and, if occasion served, tempt him with an offer of place! Besides these reasons, valid and sound so far as they went, there was another

impulse that never ceased to urge Beecher forward, and this was, a vague shadowy sort of impression that if he could only succeed in his plan he should have outwitted Grog, and "done" *him*. There was a sense of triumph associated with this thought that made his heart swell with pride. In his passion for double-dealing, he began to think how he could effect his present purpose—by what zigzag and circuitous road, through what tangled scheme of duplicity and trick. "I have it—I have it," cried he at length; and he hastened to his dressing-room, and having locked the door, he opened his writing-desk and sat down to write. But it is not at the end of a chapter **I can presume to insert his Lordship's correspondence.**

CHAPTER XC

OVERREACHINGS.

BEECHER did not amongst his gifts possess the pen of a ready-writer; but there was a strange symmetry observable between the composition and the manual part. The lines were irregular, the letters variously sized, erasures frequent, blots everwyhere, while the spelling displayed a spirit that soared above orthography. A man unused to writing, in the cares of composition is pretty much in the predicament of a bad horseman in a hunting-field. He has a vague, indistinct notion of "where" he ought to go, without the smallest conception as to the "how." He is balked or "pounded" at every step, always trying back, but never by any chance hitting off the right road to his object.

Above a dozen sheets of paper lay half scrawled over before him after two hours of hard labour, and there he still sat pondering over his weary task. His scheme was simply this: to write a few lines to Dunn, introducing his father-in-law, and instructing him to afford him all information and details as to the circumstances of the Irish property, it being his intention to establish Captain Davis in the position of his agent in that country; having done which, and given to Grog to read over, he meant to substitute another in its place, which other was confidentially to entreat of Dunn to obtain some foreign and far-away appointment for Davis, and by every imaginable means to induce him to accept it. This latter document Dunn was to be instructed to burn immediately after reading. In fact, the bare thought of what would ensue if Davis saw it, made him tremble all over, and aggravated all the difficulties of composition. Even the mode of beginning puzzled him, and there lay some eight or ten sheets scrawled over with a single line, thus: "Lord

Lackington presents his compliments"—"The Viscount Lackington requests"—"Lord Lackington takes the present opportunity"—"Dear Dunn"—"Dear Mr. Dunn"—"My dear Mr. Dunn"—"Dear D." How nicely and minutely did he weigh over in his mind the value to be attached to this exordium, and how far the importance of position counterbalanced the condescension of close intimacy!" "Better be familiar," said he, at last; "he's a vulgar dog, and he'll like it;" and so he decided for "My dear Dunn."

"MY DEAR DUNN,—As I know of your influence with the people in power—too formal that, perhaps," said he, re-reading it—"as I know what you can do with the dons in Downing-street—that's far better—I want you to book the bearer—no, that is making a flunkey of him—I want you to secure me a snug thing in the Colonies—or better, a snug Colonial appointment—for my father-in-law—no, for my friend—no, for my old and attached follower, Captain Davis—that's devilish well rounded, old and attached follower, Captain Davis.—When I tell you that I desire he may get something over the hills and far away, you'll guess at once—you'll guess at once why—no, guess the reason—no, you'll see with half an eye how the cat jumps." He threw down his pen at this and rubbed his hands in an ecstasy of delight. "Climate doesn't signify a rush, for he's strong as a three-year-old, and has the digestion of an 'ostrage;' the main thing, little to do, and opportunities for blind hookey. As to outfit, and some money in hand, I'll stand it. Once launched, if there's only a billiard-table or dice-box in the colony, he'll not starve."

"Eh, Grog, my boy," cried he, with a laugh, "as the parsons say, 'Salary less an object than a field of profitable labour!' And, by Jove! the grass will be very short indeed where you can't get enough to feed on! There's no need to give Dunn a caution about reserve, and so forth, with him—he knows Grog well."

Having finished this letter, and placed it carefully in his pocket, he began the other, which, seeing that it was never to be delivered, and only shown to Davis himself, cost him very little trouble in the composition. Still it was not devoid of all difficulty, since, by the expectations it might create in Grog's mind of obtaining the management of the Irish property, it would be actually throwing obstacles in the way of his going abroad. He

therefore worded the epistle more carefully, stating it to be his intention that Captain Davis should be his agent at some future time not exactly defined, and requesting Dunn to confer with him as one enjoying his own fullest confidence.

He had but finished the document when a sharp knock at the door announced Davis. "The very man I wanted," said Beecher; "sit down and read that."

Grog took his double eye-glass from his pocket—an aid to his sight only had recourse to when he meant to scrutinise every word and every letter—and sat down to read. "Vague enough," said he, as he concluded. "Small credentials for most men, but quite sufficient for Kit Davis."

"I know that," said Beecher, half timidly, for no sooner in the redoubted presence than he began to tremble at his own temerity.

"This Mr. Dunn is a practical sort of man, they say, so that we shall soon understand each other," said Davis.

"Oh, you'll like him greatly."

"I don't want to like him," broke in Grog; "nor do I want him to like *me*."

"He's a fellow of immense influence just now; can do what he pleases with the Ministry."

"So much the better for *him*," said Grog, bluntly.

"And for his friends, Sir," added Beecher. "He has only to send in a name, and he's sure to get what he asks for, at home or abroad."

"How convenient!" said Grog; and whether it was an accident or not, he directed his eyes full on Beecher as he spoke, and as suddenly a deep blush spread over the other's face. "Very convenient, indeed," went on Grog, while his unrelenting glance never wavered nor turned away. As he stared, so did Beecher's confusion increase, till at last, unable to endure more, he turned away, sick at heart. "My Lord Viscount," said Grog, gravely, "let me give you a word of counsel: never commit a murder, for if you do, your own fears will hang you."

"I don't understand you," faltered out Beecher.

"Yes you do; and right well, too," broke in Grog, boldly. "What rubbish have you got into your head now, about 'a place' for me? What nonsensical scheme about making me an Inspector of this, or a Collector of that? Do you imagine that for any paltry seven or eight hundred a year I'm going to enter into recognisance not to do what's worth six times the amount? Mayhap you'd like to send me to India, or to China. Oh, that's

the dodge, is it!" exclaimed he, as the crimson flush now extended over Beecher's forehead to the very roots of his hair. Well, where is it to be? There's a place called Bogota, where they always have yellow fever, couldn't you get me named Consul there? Oh dear, oh dear!" laughed he out, "how you *will* go on playing that little game, though you never score a point!"

"I sometimes imagine that you don't know how offensive your language is, said Beecher, whose angry indignation had mastered all his fears; "at least, it is the only explanation I can suggest for your conduct towards myself."

"Look at it this way," said Grog; "if you always lost the game whenever you played against one particular man, wouldn't you give in at last, and own him for your master? Well, now, that is exactly what you are doing with me—losing, losing on—and yet you won't see that you're beaten."

"I'll tell you what I see, Sir," said Beecher, haughtily, "that our intercourse must cease."

Was it not strange that this coarse man, reckless in action, headstrong and violent, felt abashed for the instant in presence of the dignified manner which, for a passing moment, the other displayed. It was the one sole weapon Grog Davis could not match, and before the "gentleman" he quailed, but only for a second or two, when he rallied and said: "I wan the intercourse as little as you do. I am here for the pleasure of being with my daughter."

"As for that," began Beecher, "there is no need——" He stopped abruptly, something terribly menacing in Grog's face actually arresting his words in the utterance.

"Take you care what you say," muttered Grog, as he approached him, and spoke with a low guttural growl. "I haven't much patience at the best of times; don't provoke me now."

"Will you take this letter—yes or no?" said Beecher, resolutely.

"I will: seal and address it," said Grog, searching for a match to light the taper, while Beecher folded the letter, and wrote the direction. Davis continued to break match after match in his effort to strike a light. Already the dusk of declining day filled the room, and objects were dimly descried. Beecher's heart beat violently. The thought that even yet, if he could summon courage for it, he might outwit Grog, sent a wild thrill through him. What ecstasy could he only succeed!

"Curse these wax contrivances! the common wooden ones never failed," muttered Davis. "There goes the fifth."

"If you'll ring for Fisher——"

An exclamation and an oath proclaimed that he had just burned his finger, but he still persevered.

"At last!" cried he—"at last!" And just as the flame rose slowly up, Beecher had slipped the letter in his pocket, and substituted the other in its place.

"I'll write 'Private and confidential,'" added Beecher, "to show that the communication is strictly for himself alone." And now the document was duly sealed, and the name "Lackington" inscribed in the corner.

"I'll start to-night," said Davis, as he placed the letter in his pocket-book; "I may have to delay a day in London, to see Fordyce. Where shall I write to you?"

"I'll talk that over with my Lady," said the other, still trembling with the remnant of his fears. "We dine at six," added he, as Davis arose to leave the room.

"So Lizzy told me," said Davis.

"You don't happen to know if she invited Twining, do you?"

"No! but I hope she didn't," said Grog, sulkily.

"Why so? He's always chatty, pleasant, and agreeable," said Beecher, whose turn it was now to enjoy the other's irritation.

"He's what I hate most in the world," said Davis, vindictively; "a swell that can walk into every Leg in the Ring—that's what he is!" And with this damnatory estimate of the light-hearted, easy-natured Adderley Twining, Grog banged the door and departed.

That social sacrament, as some one calls dinner, must have a strange, mysterious power over our affections and our sympathies, for when these two ~~men next met~~ each other, with napkins on their knees and soup before them, their manner was bland and even cordial. You will probably say, How could they be otherwise? that was neither the time nor place to display acrimony or bitterness, nor could they carry out in Lizzy's presence the unseemly discussion of the morning. Very true; and their bearing might consequently exhibit a calm and decent courtesy; but it did more—far more, it was familiar and even friendly, and it is to the especial influence of the dinner-table that I attribute the happy change. The blended decorum and splendour—that happy union of tangible pleasure with suggestive enjoyment, so typified by a well-laid and well-spread

table, is a marvellous peacemaker. Discrepant opinions blend into harmonious compromise as the savoury odours unite into an atmosphere of nutritious incense, and a wider charity to one's fellows comes in with the champagne. Where does diplomacy unbend—where do its high-priests condescend to human feelings and sympathies save at dinner? Where, save at Mansion House banquets, are great Ministers facetious? Where else are grave Chancellors jocose and Treasury Lords convivial?

The three who now met were each in their several ways in good spirits—Grog, because he had successfully reasserted his influence over Beecher; Beecher, because, while appearing to be defeated, he had duped his adversary; and Lizzy, for the far better reason that she was looking her very best, and that she knew it. She had, moreover, passed a very pleasant morning, for Mr. Twining had made it his business—doubtless with much hand-rubbing and many exclamations of "What fun!"—to go amongst all the tradespeople of Baden proclaiming the arrival of a "millionnaire Milor," and counselling them to repair with all the temptations of their shops to the hotel. The consequence was, that Lizzy's drawing-room was like a fair till the hour of dressing for dinner. Jewellery in its most attractive forms, rich lace, silks, velvets, furs, costly embroideries, inlaid cabinets, gems, ancient and modern—all the knick-knackereries which a voluptuous taste has conceived, all the extravagant inventions of a fashion bent on ruinous expenditure, were there—fans sparkling with rubies, riding-whips encrusted with turquoises, slippers studded over with pearls. There was nothing wanting: even richly-carved meerschaums and walking-sticks were paraded, in the hope that as objects of art and elegance they might attract her favour. Her father had found her dazzled and delighted by all this splendour, and told her that one of the first duties of her high station was the encouragement of art. "It is to you, and such as you, these people look for patronage," said he. "An English Peeress is a Princess, and must dispense her wealth generously."

I am bound to acknowledge her Ladyship did not shrink from this responsibility of her station. Without caring for the cost—as often without even inquiring the price—she selected what she wished; and rows of pearls, diamond bracelets, rings, and head ornaments covered her dressing-table, while sable and Astrakan cloaks, cashmeres, and Genoa velvets littered every corner of the room. "After all," thought she, as she fixed a jewelled comb in her hair, "it is very nice to be rich, and

while delighting yourself you can make so many others happy!"

Doubtless, too, there was some reason in the reflection; and in the smiling faces and grateful glances around her she found a ready confirmation of the sentiment. Happily for her at the moment, she did not know how soon such pleasures pall, and as happily for ourselves, too, is it the law of our being that they should do so, and that no enjoyment is worth the name which has cost no effort to procure, nor any happiness a boon which has not demanded an exertion to arrive at. If Beecher was startled at the sight of all these costly purchases, his mind was greatly relieved as Grog whispered him that Herr Koch, the banker, had opened a credit for him, on which he might draw as freely as he pleased. The word "Lackington" was a talisman which suddenly converted a sea of storm and peril into a lovely lake only ruffled by a zephyr.

At last the pleasant dinner drew to a close, and as the coffee was brought in the noise of a carriage beneath the windows attracted them.

"That's *my* trap," said Davis; "I ordered it for half-past eight exactly."

"But there's no train at this hour," began Lizzy.

"I know that; but I mean to post all night, and reach Carlsruhe for the first departure in the morning. I'm due in London on Monday morning—eh, my Lord?"

"Yes, that you are," said Beecher; "Dublin, Tuesday evening."

"Just so," said Davis, as he arose, "and I mean to keep my time like a pendulum. Can I do any little commission for your Ladyship as I pass through town—anything at Howell and James's—anything from Storr's?"

"I never heard of them——"

"Quite time enough, Lizzy," broke in Beecher; "not to say that we might stock a very smart warehouse with the contents of the next room. Don't forget the Courier—he can join us at Rome; and remember, we shall want a cook. The 'Mowbray' have an excellent fellow, and I'm sure an extra fifty would seduce him, particularly as he hates England, detests a Club, and can't abide the 'Sundays;' and my Lady will require something smarter than Annette as a maid."

"Oh! I couldn't part with Annette!"

"Nor need you; but you must have some one who can dress hair in a Christian fashion."

"And what do you call that?" asked Grog, with a stare of insolent meaning.

"My Lord is quite right in the epithet, for I copied my present coiffure from a picture of a Jewish girl I bought this morning, and I fancy it becomes me vastly."

There was in the easy coquetry of this speech what at once relieved the awkwardness of a very ticklish moment, and Beecher rewarded her address with a smile of gratitude.

"And the house in Portland-place to be let?" murmured Davis, as he read from his note-book. "What of that box in the Isle of Wight?"

"I rather think we shall keep it on; my sister-in-law liked it, and might wish to go there."

"Let her buy it or take a lease of it then," said Grog. "You'll see, when you come to look into it, she has been left right well off."

Beecher turned away impatiently, and made no reply.

"All that Herefordshire rubbish of model farm and farming stock had better be sold at once. You are not going into that humbug like the late Lord, I suppose?"

"I have come to no determination about Lackington Court as yet," said Beecher, coldly.

"The sooner you do, then, the better. There's not a more rotten piece of expense in the world than south-downs and short-horns, except it be Cochinchina hens and blue tulips."

"Let Fordyce look to my subscriptions at the Clubs."

"Pure waste of money when you are not going back there."

"But who says that I am not?" asked Beecher, angrily.

"Not yet a bit, at all events," replied Davis, and with a grin of malicious meaning so significant that Beecher actually sickened with terror.

"It will be quite time enough to make further arrangements when I confer with the members of my family," said Beecher, haughtily.

To this speech Davis only answered by another grin, that spoke as plain as words could, "Even the high tone will have no effect upon me." Luckily this penance was not long to endure, for Lizzy had drawn her father aside, and was whispering a few last words to him. It was in a voice so low and subdued they spoke that nothing could be heard, but Beecher imagined or fancied he heard Grog mutter: "'Pluck' will do it—'pluck will do anything.'" A long, affectionate embrace, and a fondly uttered, "Good-by, girl," followed, and then, shaking hands with Beecher, Davis lighted his cigar and departed.

Lizzy opened the window, and leaning over the balcony,

watched the carriage as it sped along the valley, the lights appearing and disappearing at intervals. What thoughts were hers as she stood there? Who knows? Did she sorrow after him, the one sole being who had cared for her through life?—did her heart sadden at the sense of desertion?—was the loneliness of her lot in life then uppermost in her mind?—or did she feel a sort of freedom in the thought that now she was to be self-guided and self-dependent? I know not. I can only say that, though a slight flush coloured her cheek, she shed no tears, and as she closed the window and returned into the room her features were calm and emotionless.

“Why did not Papa take the route by Strasburg, it is much the shortest?”

“He couldn’t,” said Beecher, with a triumphant bitterness—“he couldn’t. He can’t go near Paris.”

“By Verviers, then, and Belgium?” said she, reddening.

“He’d be arrested in Belgium and tried for his life. He has no road left but down the Rhine to Rotterdam.”

“Poor fellow!” said she, rising, “it must be a real peril that turns *him* from his path.” There was an accent on the pronoun that almost made the speech a sarcasm; at all events, ere Beecher could notice it, she had left the room.

“Now, if Fortune really meant to do me a good turn,” said Beecher to himself, “she’d just shove my respected father-in-law, writing-desk, pocket-book, and all, into the ‘Rheingau,’ never to turn up again.” And with this pious sentiment, half wish, half prayer, he went down stairs and strolled into the street.

As the bracing night air refreshed him, he walked along briskly towards Lindenthal, his mind more at ease than before. It was, indeed, no small boon that the terror of Grog’s presence was removed. The man who had seen him in all his transgressions and his short-comings was, in reality, little else than an open volume of conscience, ever wide spread before him. How could he presume in such a presence to assert one single high or honourable motive? What honest sentiment dare he enunciate? He felt in his heart that the Viscount Lackington with ten thousand a year was not the Honourable Annesley Beecher with three hundred. The noble Lord could smile at the baits that to the younger son were irresistible temptations. There was no necessity that *he* should plot, scheme, and contrive; or if he did, it should be for a higher prize, or in a higher sphere, and with higher antagonists. And yet Grog would not have it so. Let him do what he would, there was the inexorable Davis ever

ready to bring down Lackington to the meridian of Beecher! Amidst all the misfortunes of his life the ever having known this man was the worst—the very worst!

And now he began to go over in his mind some of the most eventful incidents of this companionship. It was a gloomy catalogue of debauch and ruin. Young fellows entrapped at the very outset in life, led on to play, swindled, "hocussed," menaced with exposure, threatened with who knows what perils of public scandal if they refused to sign this or that "promise to pay." Then all the intrigues to obtain the money: the stealthy pursuit of the creditor to the day of his advancement or his marriage; the menaces measured out to the exigencies of the case—now a prosecution, now a pistol. What a dreadful labyrinth of wickedness was it, and how had he threaded through it undetected! He heaved a heavy sigh as he muttered a sort of thanksgiving that it was all ended at last—all over! "If it were not for Grog, these memories need never come back to me," said he. "Nobody wants to recal them against me, and the world will be most happy to dine with the Viscount Lackington without a thought of the transgressions of Annesley Beecher! If it were not for Grog—if it were not for Grog!"—and so ran the eternal refrain at the close of each reflection. "At all events," said he, "I'll 'put the Alps between us,'" and early on the following morning the travelling-carriage stood ready at the door, and amidst the bowings and reverences of the hotel functionaries, the "happy pair" set out for Italy.

Do not smile in any derision at the phrase, good reader, the words are classic by newspaper authority; and whatever popular preachers may aver to the contrary, we live in a most charming world, where singleness is blessed and marriage is happy, public speaking is always eloquent, and soldiery ever gallant. Still, even a sterner critic might have admitted that the epithet was not misapplied, for there are worse things in life than to be a Viscount with a very beautiful wife, rolling pleasantly along the Via Mala on Collinge's best patent, with six smoking posters, on a bright day of November. This for his share; as to hers, I shall not speak of it. And yet, why should I not? Whatever may be the conflict in the close citadel of the heart, how much of pleasure is derivable from the mere aspect of a beautiful country as one drives rapidly along, swift enough to bring the changes of scene agreeably before the eye, and yet not too fast to admit of many a look at some spot especially

beautiful. And then how charming to lose oneself in that dreamland, where—peopling the landscape with figures of long, long ago, we too have our part, and ride forth at daybreak from some deep-vaulted portal in jingling mail, or gaze from some lone tower over the wide expanse that forms our baronial realm—visions of ambition, fancies of a lowly, humble life, alternating as the rock-crowned castle or the sheltered cot succeed each other. And lastly, that strange, proud sentiment we feel as we sweep past town and village, where human life goes on in its accustomed track: the crowd in the market-place—the little group around the inn—the heavy waggon unloading at the little quay—the children hastening on to school,—all these signs of a small, small world of its own, that we, in our greatness, are never again to gaze on, our higher destiny bearing us ever onward to grander and more pretentious scenes.

“And this is Italy?” said Lizzy, half aloud, as, emerging from the mists of the Higher Alps, the carriage wound its zigzag descent from the Splugen, little glimpses of the vast plain of Lombardy coming into view at each turn of the way, and then the picturesque outlines of old ruinous Chiavenna, its tumble-down houses, half hid in trellised vines, and farther on again the head of the lake of Como, with its shores of rugged rock.

“Yes, and this miserable dog-hole here is called Campo Dolcino!” said Beecher, as he turned over the leaves of his “John Murray.” “That’s the most remarkable thing about these Italians, they have such high-sounding names for everything, and we are fools enough to be taken in by the sound.”

“It is a delusion that we are rather disposed to indulge in generally,” said Lizzy. “The words, ‘your Majesty,’ or ‘your Highness,’ have their own magic in them, even when the representatives respond but little to the station.”

“It was your father, I fancy, taught you that lesson,” said he, peevishly.

“What lesson do you mean?”

“To hold people of high rank cheaply—to imagine that they must be all cheats and impositions.”

“No,” said she calmly, but resolutely. “If he taught me anything on this subject, it was to attribute to persons of exalted station very lofty qualities. What I have to fear is, that my expectation will be far above the reality. I can imagine what they might be, but I’m not so sure it is what I shall find them.”

"You had better not say so to my sister-in-law," said Beecher, jeeringly.

"It is not my intention," said she, with the same calm voice.

"I make that remark," resumed he, "because she has what some people would call exaggerated notions about the superiority of the well-born over all inferior classes; indeed, she is scarcely just in her estimate of low people."

"Low people are really to be pitted!" said she, with a slight laugh; and Beecher stole a quick glance at her, and was silent.

He was not able long to maintain this reserve. The truth was, he felt an invincible desire to recur to the class in life from which Lizzy came, and to speak disparagingly of all who were humbly born. Not that this vulgarity was really natural to him—far from it. With all his blemishes and defects he was innately too much a gentleman to descend to this. The secret impulse was to be revenged of Grog Davis—to have the one only possible vengeance on the man that had "done him," and even though that was only to be exacted through Davis's daughter, it pleased him. And so he went on to tell of the prejudices—absurd, of course—that persons like Lady Georgina would persist in entertaining about common people. "You'll have to be so careful in all your intercourse with her," said he; "easy, natural, of course, but never familiar—she wouldn't stand it."

"I will be careful," said Lizzy, calmly.

"The chances are, she'll find out some one of the name, and ask you, in her own half-careless way, 'Are you of the Staffordshire Davises? or do you belong to the Davises of such a place?'"

"If she should, I can only reply that I don't know," said Lizzy.

"Oh! but you mustn't say that," laughed out Beecher, who felt a sort of triumph over what he regarded as his wife's simplicity.

"You would not surely have me say that I was related to these people?"

"No, not exactly that; but still, to say that you didn't know whether you were or not, would be a terrible blunder! It would amount to a confession that you were Davises of nowhere at all."

"Which is about the truth, perhaps," said she, in the same tone.

"Oh! truth is a very nice thing, but not always pleasant to tell."

"But don't you think you could save me from an examination in which I am so certain to acquit myself ill, by simply stating that you have married a person without rank, station, or fortune? These facts once understood, I feel certain that her Ladyship will never allude to them unpleasantly."

"Then there's another point," said Beecher, evidently piqued that he had not succeeded in irritating her—"there's another point—and you must be especially careful about it—never by any chance let out that you were educated at a school, or a Pensionnat, or whatever they call it. If there's anything she cannot abide, it is the thought of a girl brought up at a school, mind, therefore, only say, 'my Governess.'"

She smiled and was silent.

"Then she'll ask you if you had been 'out?' and when you were presented? and who presented you? She'll do it so quietly and so naturally, you'd never guess that she meant any impertinence by it."

"So much the better, for I shall not feel offended."

"As to the Drawing-room," rejoined Beecher, "you must say that you always lived very retiredly—never came up to town—that your father saw very little company."

"Is not this Chiavenna we're coming to?" asked Lizzy, a slight—but very slight—flush rising to her cheek. And now the loud cracking of the postillions' whips drowned all other sounds as the horses tore along through the narrow streets, making the frail old houses rock and shiver as they passed. A miserable-looking vetturino carriage stood at the inn door, and was dragged hastily out of the way to make room for the more pretentious equipage. Scarcely had the Courier got down than the whole retinue of the inn was in motion, eagerly asking if "Milordo" would not alight? if his "Eccellenza" would not take some refreshment?

But his "Eccellenza" would do neither; sooth to say, he was not in the best of humours, and curtly said, "No, I want nothing but post-horses to get out of this wretched place."

"Isn't that like an Englishman?" said a voice from the vetturino carriage to some one beside him.

"But I know him," cried the other, leaping out. "It's the new Viscount Lackington." And with this he approached the carriage, and respectfully removing his hat, said, "How d'ye do, my Lord?"

"Ah, Spicer! you here?" said Beecher, half haughtily.
"Off to England, I suppose?"

"No, my Lord, I'm bound for Rome."

"So are we, too. Lady Lackington and myself," added he, correcting at once a familiar sort of a glance that Spicer found time to bestow upon Lizzy. "Do you happen to know if Lady Georgina is there?"

"Yes, my Lord, at the Palazzo Gondi, on the Pintian;" and here Spicer threw into his look an expression of respectful homage to her Ladyship.

"Palazzo Gondi; will you try and remember that address?" said Beecher to his wife. And then, waving his hand to Spicer, he added, "Good-by—meet you at Rome some of these days," and was gone.

CHAPTER XCL

AT ROME.

IN a small and not very comfortably furnished room looking out upon the Pincian Hill at Rome, two ladies were seated, working, one in deep mourning, whose freshness indicated a recent loss, the other, in a strangely fashioned robe of black silk, whose deep cape and rigid absence of ornament recalled something of the cloister. The first was the widowed Viscountess Lackington, the second the Lady Grace Twining, a recent convert to Rome, and now on her way to some ecclesiastical preferment in the Church either as "Chanoinesse" or something equally desirable. Lady Lackington looked ill and harassed, there were not on her face any traces of deep sorrow or affliction, but the painful marks of much thought. It was the expression of one who had gone through a season of trial wherein she had to meet events and personages all new and strange to her. It was only during the last few days of Lord Lackington's illness that she learned the fact of a contested claim to the title, but brief as was the time every post brought a mass of letters bearing on this painful topic. While the lawyers, therefore, showered their unpleasant and discouraging tidings, there was nothing to be heard of Beecher; none knew where he was, or how a letter was to reach him. All her own epistles to him remained unacknowledged. Fordyce's people could not trace him, neither could Mr. Dunn, and there was actually the thought of asking the aid of that inquisitorial service whose detective energies are generally directed in the pursuit of guilt.

If Annesley Beecher might be slow to acknowledge the claims of fraternal affection, there was no one could accuse him of any lukewarmness to his own interests, and though it was now two months and upwards since the Viscount's death, yet he

had never come forward to assert his new rank and station. Whatever suspicions might have weighed down the mind of the Viscountess regarding this mysterious disappearance, the language of all the lawyers' letters was assuredly ill calculated to assuage. They more than hinted that they suspected some deep game of treachery and fraud. Beecher's long and close intimacy with the worst characters of the Turf—men notorious for their agency in all the blackest intrigues—was continually brought up. His life of difficulty and strait, his unceasing struggle to meet his play engagements, driving him to the most ruinous compacts, all were quoted to show that to a man of such habits and with such counsellors any compromise would be acceptable that offered present and palpable advantages in lieu of a possible and remote future.

The very last letter the Viscountess received from Fordyce contained this startling passage: "It being perfectly clear that Mr. Beecher would only be too ready to avail himself of his newly acquired privileges if he could, we must direct our sole attention to those circumstances which may explain why he could not declare himself the Viscount Lackington. Now, the very confident tone lately assumed by the Conway party seems to point to this mysterious clue, and everything I learn more and more disposes me to apprehend a shameful compromise."

It was with the letter that contained this paragraph before her Lady Lackington now sat, affecting to be engaged in her work, but, in reality, reading over, for the fiftieth time, the same gloomy passage.

"Is it not incredible that, constituted as the world now is, with its railroads and its telegraphs, you cannot immediately discover the whereabouts of any missing individual?" said Lady Lackington.

"I really think he must have been murdered," said Lady Grace, with the gentlest of accents, while she bent her head over the beautiful altar-cloth she was embroidering.

"Nonsense—absurdity! such a crime would soon have publicity enough."

Lady Grace gave a smile of compassionate pity at the speech, but said nothing.

"I can't imagine how you could believe such a thing possible," said the Viscountess, tartly.

"I can only say, my dear, that, no later than last night, Monsignore assured me that, through M. Mazzini and the Bible societies, you can make away with any one in Europe, and,

indeed, in most parts of the world besides. Don't smile so contemptuously, my dear. Remember who it is says this. Of course, as he remarks, the foolish newspapers have their own stupid explanations always ready, at one moment calling it a political crime, at another the act of insanity, and so on. They affected this language about Count Rossi, and then about the dear and sainted Archbishop of Paris; but what true believer ever accepted this?"

"Monsignore would not hold this language to *me*," said Lady Lackington, haughtily.

"Very probably not, dearest; he spoke in confidence when he mentioned it to me."

"I mean, that he would hesitate ere he forfeited any respect I entertain for his common sense by the utterance of such wild absurdity. What is it, Turner," asked she, suddenly, as her maid entered.

"Four packing-cases have just come, my Lady, with Mr. Spicer's respectful compliments, and that he will be here immediately—he has only gone to change his dress,"

"Why don't he come at once? I don't care for his dress."

"No, my Lady, of course not," said Turner, and retired.

"I must say he has made haste," said Lady Lackington, languidly. "It was only on the eighth or the ninth, I think, he left this, and as he had to get all my mourning things—I had actually nothing—and to go down to Lackington Court, and then to Wales, and after that to the Isle of Wight, what with lawyers and other tiresome people to talk to, he has really not done badly."

"I hope he has brought the chalice," sighed Lady Grace.

"I hope he has brought some tidings of my respectable brother-in-law," said the Viscountess, in a tone that seemed to say where the really important question lay.

"And the caviare—I trust he has not forgotten the caviare. It is the only thing Monsignore eats at breakfast in Advent."

An insolent gesture of the head was all the acknowledgment Lady Lackington vouchsafed to this speech. At last she spoke. "When he can get horse-racing out of his head, Spicer is a very useful creature."

"Very indeed," said Lady Grace.

"The absurd notion that he is a sporting character is the parent of so many other delusions; he fancies himself affluent, and, stranger still, imagines he's a gentleman." And the idea so amused her Ladyship, that she laughed aloud at it.

"Mr. Spicer, my Lady," said a servant, flinging wide the door, and in a most accurate morning-dress, every detail of which was faultless, that gentleman bowed his way across the room with an amount of eagerness that might possibly exact a shake of the hand, but, if unsuccessful, might easily subside into a colder acceptance. Lady Lackington vouchsafed nothing beyond a faint smile, and the words, "How d'y'e do?" as with a slight gesture she motioned to him the precise chair he was to seat himself on. Before taking his place, Mr. Spicer made a formal bow to Lady Grace, who, with a vacant smile, acknowledged the courtesy, and went on with her work.

"You have made very tolerable haste, Spicer," said Lady Lackington. "I scarcely expected you before Saturday."

"I have not been to bed for six nights, my Lady."

"You'll sleep all the better for it to-night, perhaps."

"We had an awful gale of wind in crossing to Calais—the passage took eight hours."

"You relished land travelling all the more for it afterwards."

"Not so, my Lady; for at Lyons the whole country was flooded, and we were obliged to march eleven miles afoot on a railway embankment, and under a tremendous storm of rain; but even that was not the worst, for in crossing the St. Bernard——"

"I really don't care for such moving accidents, I always skip them in the newspapers. What of my mourning—is much crape worn?"

"A great deal of crape, my Lady, and in 'bouffes' down the dress."

"With bugles or without? I see by your hesitation, Sir, you have forgotten about the bugles."

"No, my Lady, I have them," said he, proudly; "small acorns of jet are also worn on points of the flounces, and Madame Frontin suggested that, as your Ladyship dislikes black so much——"

"But who said as much, Sir?" broke she in, angrily.

"And the caviare, Mr. Spicer—have you remembered the caviare?" lisped out Lady Grace.

"Yes, my Lady; but Fortnum's people are afraid some of it may prove a failure. There was something, I don't know what, happened to the fish in the Baltic this year."

"Who ventured to say black was unbecoming to me?" asked Lady Lackington, changing her question, and speaking more angrily.

"It was Frontin, my Lady, who remarked that you once had said nothing would ever induce you to wear that odious helmet widows sometimes put on."

"Oh dear! and I have such a fancy for it," exclaimed Lady Grace.

"You mistake, my dear; you are confounding the occasion with the costume," said Lady Lackington; and her eyes sparkled with the malice of her remark.

Mr. Spicer's face exhibited as much enjoyment of the wit as he deemed decorous to the party satirised.

"And now, Sir, for the important part of your mission: have you obtained any information about my brother-in-law?"

"Yes, my Lady, I saw him at Chiavenna. He drove up to the post-house to change horses as we were there; he told me, in the few minutes we spoke together, that they were on their way to Rome."

"Whom do you mean, Sir, when you say 'they?'"

"Lord and Lady Lackington, my Lady."

"Is he married? Did you say he was married, Sir?" exclaimed she, in a voice discordant above all her efforts to restrain.

"Yes, my Lady; I was, in a manner, presented to her Ladyship, who was, I must say, a very beautiful person——"

"I want no raptures, Sir; are you quite certain she was his wife?"

"His Lordship told me so, my Lady, and when they reached the Hôtel Royal, at Milan, I took occasion to question the courier, whom I knew before, and he told me all about it."

"Go on, Sir."

"Well, my Lady, they were just married about ten or twelve days when I met them; the ceremony had been performed in some little out-of-the-way spot in the Rhine country where Mr. Beecher had been staying for the summer, and, where, as it happened, he never received any tidings of the late Lord's death, or the presumption is, he had never made this unfortunate connexion."

"What do you mean by 'unfortunate connexion?'"

"Why, one must really call it so, my Lady; the world, at least, will say as much."

"Who is she, Sir?"

"She's the daughter of one of the most notorious men in England, my Lady, the celebrated Leg, Grog Davis."

Ah, Mr. Spicer, small and insignificant as you are, you have

your sting, and her Ladyship has felt it. These words, slowly uttered in a tone of assumed sorrow, so overcame her they were addressed to, that she covered her face with her handkerchief and sat thus, speechless, for several minutes. To Spicer it was a moment of triumph—it was a vengeance for all the insults, all the slights she showered upon him, and he only grieved to think how soon her proud spirit would rally from the shock.

Lady Lackington's face, as she withdrew her handkerchief, was of ashy paleness, and her bloodless lips trembled with emotion. "Have you heard what this man has said, Grace?" whispered she, in a voice so distinct as to be audible throughout the room.

"Yes, dearest; it is most distressing," said the other, in the softest of accents.

"Distressing! It is an infamy!" cried she. Then suddenly turning to Spicer, with flaring eyes and flushed face, she said, "You have rather a talent for blundering, Sir, and it is just as likely this is but a specimen of your powers. I am certain she is not his wife."

"I can only say, my Lady, that I took pains enough to get the story accurately; and as Kuffner, the courier, was at the marriage——"

"Marriage!" broke she in, with a sarcastic irony; "why, Sir, it is not thus a Peer of England selects the person who is to share his dignity."

"But you forget, my Lady," interposed Spicer, "that he didn't know he was a Peer—he had not the slightest expectation of being one—at the time. Old Grog knew it——"

"Have a care, Sir, and do not *you* forget yourself. These familiar epithets are for your associates in the Ring, and not for *my* ears."

"Well, the Captain, my Lady—he is as well known by that name as the other—he had all the information, and kept back the letters, and managed the whole business so cleverly, that the first Mr. Beecher ever knew of his Lordship's death was when hearing it from Mr. Twining at Baden."

"I thought Mr. Twining was in Algiers, or Australia, I forget which, said Lady Grace, gently.

"Such a marriage must be a mockery—a mere mockery. He shall break it—he must break it!" said Lady Lackington, as she walked up and down with the long strides and the step of a tigress in a cage.

"Oh dear! they are so difficult to break!" sighed Lady

Grace. "Mr. Twining always promised me a divorce when the law came in and made it so cheap, and now he says that it's all a mistake, and until another Bill, or an Act, or something or other, is passed, that it's a luxury far above persons of moderate fortune."

"Break it he shall," muttered Lady Lackington, as she continued her march.

"Of course, dearest, expense doesn't signify to *you*," sighed out Lady Grace.

"And do you mean to tell me, Sir," said Lady Lackington, "that this is the notorious Captain Davis of whose doings we have been reading in every newspaper?"

"Yes, my Lady, he is the notorious"—he was going to say Grog, but corrected himself, and added—"Captain Davis, and has been for years back the intimate associate of the present Lord Lackington."

Mr. Spicer was really enjoying himself on this occasion, nor was it often his fortune to give her Ladyship so much annoyance innocuously. His self-indulgence, however, carried him too far, for Lady Lackington, suddenly turning round, caught the expression of gratified malice on his face.

"Take care, Sir—take care," she cried, with a menacing gesture of her finger. "There may chance to be a flaw somewhere in your narrative; and if there should, Mr. Spicer—if there should—I don't *think* Lord Lackington would forget it—I am *sure* I shan't." And with this threatening declaration her Ladyship swept out of the room in most haughty fashion.

"This is all what comes of being obliging," exclaimed Spicer, unable to control himself any longer. "It was not *I* that threw Beecher into Grog's company—it was not *I* that made him marry Grog's daughter. For all that *I* cared, he might go and be a monk at La Trappe, or marry as many wives as Brigham Young himself."

"I hope you brought me Lady Gertrude Oscot's book, Mr. Spicer—'Rays through Oriel Windows?'" said Lady Grace, in one of her sweetest voices. "She is such a charming poetess."

"I'd lay my life on't, she's just as wide-awake as her father," muttered Spicer to himself.

"As wide-awake? Dear me, what can you mean?"

"That she's fly—up to trap—oh, isn't she!" went he on, still communing to himself.

"Lady Gertrude Oscot, Sir?"

"No; but Grog Davis's daughter—the new Viscountess

Lackington—my Lady. I was thinking of *her*," said Spicer, suddenly recalled to a sense of where he stood.

"I protest, Sir, I cannot understand how two persons so totally dissimilar could occur to any mind at the same moment." And with this Lady Grace gathered up the details of her embroidery, and curtsying a deep and formal adieu, left the room.

"Haven't I gone and done it with both of them!" said Spicer, as he took out his cigar-case to choose a cigar; not that he had the slightest intention of lighting it in such a place—no profanity of the kind ever occurred to him—all he meant was the mock bravado to himself of an act that seemed to imply so much coolness, such collected courage. As to striking a light, he'd as soon have done it in a magazine.

And sticking his cigar in his mouth, he left the house; even in the street he forgot to light it, and strolled along, turning his weed between his lips, and revolving no very pleasant thoughts in his mind; "All the way to England, down to Wales, then the Isle of Wight, seeing no end of people—lawyers, milliners, agents, proctors, jewellers, and dressmakers—eternal explanations and expostulations, begging for this, deprecating that; asking this man to be active and the other to be patient; and then back again over the whole breadth of Europe in atrocious weather, sea-sick, and land-sick, tossed, jolted, and shaken—and all for what—ay, for what? To be snubbed, outraged, and insulted, treated like a lacquey—no, but ten times worse than any lacquey would bear. And why should I bear it? That's the question. Why should I? Does it signify a brass farthing to me whether the noble house of Lackington quarters its arms with the cogged dice and the marked king of the Davises? What do I care about their tarnished shield? It's rather cool of my Lady to turn upon *me*!" Well reasoned and true, Mr. Spicer; you have but forgotten one small item in the account, which is the consideration accorded to you by your own set, because you were seen to mingle with those so much above you.

We are told that when farthings are shaken up a sufficiently long time with guineas in a bag they acquire a sort of yellow lustre, which, though by no means enabling them to pass for guineas, still makes them wonderfully bright farthings, and doubtless would render them very intolerant in the company of their equals. Such was, in a measure, what had happened to Mr. Spicer; and though at first sight the process would seem a gain, it is in reality the reverse, since, after this mock gilding,

the coin—whether it be man or farthing—has lost its stamp of truthfulness, and will not “pass” for even the humble value it once represented.

“At all events,” thought Mr. Spicer, as he went along, “her Ladyship has not come off scot free for all her impertinence. I have given her materials for a very miserable morning, and irritated the very sorest spot in all her mind. It was just the very lesson she wanted; there’s nothing will do her so much good in the world.”

It is by no means an uncommon delusion for ill-natured people to fancy that they are great moral physicians, and that the bitters they drop into *your* wine-glass and *my* tea-cup are admirable tonics, which our constitutions require. The drug is not always an evil, but the doctor is detestable.

As Spicer drew nigh one of the great hotels in the Piazza di Spagna he recognised Beecher’s travelling-carriage just being unloaded at the door. They had arrived at that moment, and the courier was bustling about and giving his orders like one whose master was likely to exact much and pay handsomely.

“The whole of the first floor, Freytag,” said the courier, authoritatively; “every room of it. My Lord cannot bear the disturbance of people lodged near him.”

“He used not to be so particular in the ‘Bench,’” muttered Spicer. “I remember his sleeping one of three in a room.”

“Ah, Mr. Spicer! my Lord said, if I should meet you, to mention he wishes to see you.”

“Do you think he’d receive me now, Kuffner?”

“Well, I’ll go and see.”

Mr. Kuffner came speedily back, and beckoning to Spicer to follow, led the way to Lord Lackington’s room. “He is dressing for dinner, but will see you,” added he, as he introduced him.

The noble Viscount did not turn from the mirror at which he was elaborately arranging his neckcloth as Spicer entered, but satisfied himself with calling out, “Take a chair, Spicer, you’ll find one somewhere.”

The tone of the salutation was not more significant than the aspect of this room itself. All the articles of a costly dressing-case of silver-gilt were ranged on one table. Essence-bottles, snuff-boxes, pipe-heads, with rings, jewelled buttons, and such-like knick-knackereries covered another; whatever fancy could suggest or superfluity compass of those thousand-and-one trinkets the effeminacy of our age has introduced into

male costume, all abounded. Quantities, too, of the most expensive clothes were there—rich uniforms, fur-lined pelisses, and gold-embroidered waistcoats. And as Mr. Spicer quickly made the tour of these with his eye, his gaze rested at last on my Lord himself, whose dressing-gown of silver brocade would have made a state robe for a Venetian Doge.

"Everything is in confusion just now, but if you'll throw down some of those things, you'll get a chair," said Beecher, carelessly.

"Spicer, however, preferred to take his place at the chimney, on which he leaned in an attitude that might take either the appearance of respect or familiarity, as the emergency required.

"When did you arrive?" asked my Lord.

"About two hours ago," was the short reply.

Beecher turned to gaze at the man, who answered without more semblance of deference, and now, for the first time, their eyes met. It was evidently Spicer's game, by a bold assertion of former intimacy, to place their future intercourse on its old footing, and just as equally decided was Beecher that no traditions of the past should rise up and obtrude themselves on the present, and so he threw into this quiet, steady stare an amount of haughty resolution, before which Spicer quailed and struck his flag.

"Perhaps, I should say, three hours, my Lord," added Spicer, flurriedly; and Beecher turned away with a slight curl on his lip, as though to say, "The conflict was not a very long one." Spicer marked the expression, and vowed vengeance for it.

"I thought you'd have got here two or three days before," said Beecher, carelessly.

"Vetturino travelling is not like extra-post, my Lord," said Spicer, fawningly. "You could cover your hundred miles between breakfast and a late dinner, while we thought ourselves wonderful to get over forty from sunrise to midnight."

"That's true yawned out Beecher; "Vetturino work must be detestable."

"No man could give you a better catalogue of its grievances than your father-in-law, my Lord; he has had a long experience of them. I remember, one winter, we started from Brussels in the deep snow—there was Baring, Hope, Fisk, Grog, and myself."

"I don't care to hear your adventures; and it would be just as agreeable to me were you to call my relative Captain Davis, as to speak of him by a vulgar nickname."

"Faith, my Lord, I didn't mean it. It slipped out quite unconsciously, just as it did a while ago—far more awkwardly, by-the-by—when I was talking to Lady Lackington. The Dowager, I mean."

"And what occasion, Sir, had you to refer to Captain Davis in *her* company?" asked Beecher, fiercely.

"She asked me plumply, my Lord, what was her Ladyship's name, what family she came of, who her connections were, and I told her that I never heard of any of them, except her father, popularly known as Grog Davis—a man that every one on the Turf was acquainted with."

"You are a malicious scoundrel, Spicer," said Beecher, whose pale cheek now shook and trembled with passion.

"Well, I don't think so, my Lord," said the other, quietly. "It is not, certainly, the character the world gives me. And as to what passed between her Ladyship and myself this afternoon, I did my very best to escape difficulties. I told her that the Brighton affair was almost forgotten now—it was fully eighteen years since it happened; that as to Charles Herbert's death, there were two stories—some averring that poor Charley had actually struck Grog—and then, though the York trial was a public scandal—Well, my Lord, don't look so angrily at me—it was by no fault of *mine* these transactions became notorious."

"And what have you been all your whole life to this Davis but his cad and errand-boy, a fellow he has sent with a bad horse—for he would not have trusted you with a good one—to run for a hack stakes in an obscure county, a lounge about stables and the steps of club-houses, picking up scraps of news from the jocks and selling them to the gentlemen? Does it become you to turn out Kit Davis and run full cry after him?"

It was but rarely that Beecher's indignation could warm up to the temperature of downright passion, but when it did so, it gave the man a sort of power that few would have recognised in his weak and yielding nature; at all events, Spicer was not the man to stem such a torrent, and so he stared at him with mingled terror and anger.

"I tell you, Mr. Spicer," added Beecher, more passionately still, "if you hadn't known Davis was a thousand miles away, you'd never have trusted yourself to speak of him in this fashion; but, for your comfort I say it, he'll be here in a day or two."

"I never said a word of him you'd not find in the newspapers," said Spicer, doggedly

"When you come to settle accounts together it will surprise me very much if there won't be matter for another paragraph in them," said Beecher, with a sneer.

Spicer winced; he tried to arrange his neckcloth, and then to button his glove, but all his efforts could not conceal a tremor that shook him from head to foot. Now, when Beecher got his "man down," he never thought he could trample enough upon him; and, as he walked the room in hasty strides to and fro, he jeeringly pictured to Spicer the pleasures of his next meeting with Davis; not, indeed, but that all his eloquence was superfluous—it needed no descriptive powers to convince any who enjoyed Grog's *friendship* what his enmity might imply.

"I know him as well as *you* do, my Lord," said Spicer, as his patience at last gave way. "And I know, besides, there's more than half the Continent where he can't set a foot."

"Perhaps, you mentioned that, also, to my sister-in-law," said Beecher, derisively.

"No, I said nothing about it!" muttered the other.

There was now a pause—each only waited for any the slightest show of concession to make advances to the other; for, although without the slightest particle of good feeling on either side, they well knew the force of the adage that enjoins friendship among knaves. My Lord thoroughly appreciated the utility of a Spicer—well did Spicer understand all the value of a Peer's acquaintance.

Each ruminated long over the situation, and at last Beecher said, "Did poor Lackington leave you anything in his will?"

"A racing snaffle and two whips, my Lord."

"Poor fellow, he never forgot any one, I'm sure," sighed Beecher.

"He had a wonderful memory indeed, my Lord, for I had borrowed twenty pounds of him at the Canterbury races some ten years ago, and he said to me just before he took to bed, 'Never mind the trifle that's between us, Spicer, I shall not take it.'"

"Good-hearted, generous fellow!" muttered Beecher.

Spicer's mouth twitched a little, but he did not speak.

"There never was a better brother, never!" said Beecher, far more intent upon the display of his own affectionate sorrow than in commemorating fraternal virtues. "We never had a word of disagreement in our lives. Poor Lackington! he used to think he was doing the best by me by keeping me so tight and always threatening to cut me down still lower; he meant it for the best,

but you know I couldn't live upon it, the thing was impossible. If I hadn't been one of the 'wide-awakes' I'd have gone to the wall at once; and let me tell you, Master Spicer, it wasn't every fellow would have kept his head over water where I was swimming."

"That I'm convinced of," said Spicer, gravely.

"Well, it's a long lane has no turning, Spicer," said he, complacently looking at himself in the glass. "Even a runaway pulls up somewhere; not but I'm sorry from the bottom of my heart for poor Lack, but it will be our own turn one of these days, that's a match there's no paying forfeit on, eh, Spicer? it must come off whether we will or not!"

"So it must, my Lord," sighed out Spicer, sympathetically.

"Ay, by Jove! whether a man leaves twelve thousand a year or only two hundred behind him," sighed out Beecher, who could not help making the application to himself.

Again did Spicer sigh, and so profoundly it might have represented grief for the whole Peerage.

"I say, old fellow," said Beecher, clapping him familiarly on the shoulder, "I wish you hadn't told Georgy all that stuff about Davis; these things do no good."

"I assure you solemnly, my Lord, I said it with the best motives; her Ladyship would certainly learn the whole history somewhere, and so I thought I'd just sketch the thing off in a light, easy way."

"Come, come, Spicer—no gammon, my lad; you never tried any of your light, easy ways with *my* sister-in-law. At all events, it's done, and can't be undone now," sighed he, drearily. Then, after a moment, he added, "How did she take the news?"

"Well, at first, my Lord, she wouldn't believe it, but went on—'She's not his wife, Sir; I tell you they're not married,' and so on."

"Well—and then?"

"Then, my Lord, I assured her that there could be no doubt of the matter—that your Lordship had done me the honour of presenting me——"

"Which I never did, Master Spicer," laughed in Beecher—"you know well enough that I never did; but a fib won't choke you, old fellow."

"At all events, I made it clear that you were really married, and to the daughter of a man that would send you home on a shutter if you threw any doubt on it."

"Wouldn't he, by Jupiter!" exclaimed Beecher, with all the

sincerity of a great fact. "Well, after *that*, how did she take on?"

"She didn't say a word, but rocked from side to side, *this way*—like one going to faint; and indeed her colour all went, and she was pale as a corpse; and then she took long breaths, and muttered below her voice, 'This is worst of all!' After that, she rallied, and certainly gave it to your Lordship in round style, but always winding it up with—'Break it he shall, and must, if it was the Archbishop of Canterbury married them.'"

"Very fine talking, Master Spicer, but matrimony is a match where you can't scratch and pay forfeits. I wish you could," muttered he to himself. "I wish you had the presence of mind and the pluck to have told her that it was *my* affair, and not *hers*. As to the honour of the Lackingtons and all that lot, she isn't a Lackington any more than you are—she's a De Tracey; good blood, no better, but she isn't one of us, and you ought to have told her so."

"I own I'd not have had courage for that!" said Spicer, candidly.

"That's what I'd have said in your place, Spicer. The present Viscount Lackington is responsible to himself, and not to the late Lord's widow; and, what's more, he is no flat, without knowledge of men and the world, but a fellow with both eyes open, and who has gone through as smart a course of education as any man in the Ring. Take up the Racing Calendar, and show me any one since Huckaback beat Crim. Con. that ever got it so 'hot' as I have. No, no, my Lady, it won't do, preaching to me about 'life.' If I don't know a thing or two, who does? If you'd have had your wits about you, Spicer, that's what you'd have told her."

"I'm not so ready at a pinch as you are, my Lord," muttered Spicer, who affected sullenness.

"Few are, Master Spicer—very few are, I can tell you;" and in the pleasure of commending and complimenting himself and his own great gifts, Beecher speedily ceased to remember what so lately had annoyed him. "Dine here at seven, Spicer," said he, at last, "and I'll present you to my Lady. She'll be amused with *you*." Though the last words were uttered in a way that made their exact significance somewhat doubtful, Mr. Spicer never sought to canvass them; he accepted the invitation in good part, for he was one of those men who, though they occasionally "quarrel with their bread-and-butter," are wise enough never to fall out with their truffles.

CHAPTER XCII.

THE TWO VISCONTESSES.

WHEN the new Viscount had dismissed Mr. Spicer, he set out to visit his sister-in-law. Any one who has been patient enough to follow the stages of this history will readily imagine that he did not address himself to the task before him with remarkable satisfaction. If it had been a matter to be bought off by money, he would readily have paid down a good round sum as forfeit. It was no use fortifying himself, as he tried to do, by all the commonplaces he kept repeating to his own heart, saying, "She ain't my guardian. I'm no ward to be responsible to *her*. She can exercise no control over me or my property. She's the dowager and no more." All the traditions of his younger brother life rose up in rebellion against these doctrines, and he could think of her as nothing but the haughty Viscountess, who had so often pronounced the heaviest censures upon his associates and his mode of living. A favourite theory of his was it also, in olden time, to imagine that, but for Georgina, Lackington would have done this, that, and t'other for him; that she it was who thwarted all his brother's generous impulses, and taught him to look with stern disfavour on his life of debt and dissipation. These memories rushed now fully to his mind, and assuredly added no sentiment of pleasure to his expectation of the meeting. More than once did he come to a halt, and deliberate whether, seeing how unpleasant such an interview must prove, he need incur the pain of it. "I could write to her, or I could send Lizzy to say that I was confined to bed, and ill. Wouldn't that be a flare up! By Jove! if I could only see the match as

it came off between them, I'd do *that*. Not but I know Georgy would win; she'd come out so strong as 'Grande Dame,' the half-bred 'un would have no chance. Still there would be a race, and a close one, for Lizzy has her own turn of speed, and if she had the breeding——" And as he got thus far in his ruminations, he had reached the Palazzo Gondi, where his sister-in-law lived. With a sort of sullen courage he rang the bell, and was shown in: her Ladyship was dressing, but would be down in a moment.

Beecher had now some minutes alone, and he passed them scrutinising the room and its appurtenances. All was commoner and more homely than he looked for. Not many indications of comfort—scarcely any of luxury. What might this mean? Was her settlement so small as to exact this economy, or was it a voluntary saving. If so, it was the very reverse of all her former tastes, for she was essentially one who cultivated splendour and expense. This problem was still puzzling him, when the door opened and she entered. He advanced rapidly to meet her, and saluted her on each cheek. There was a strange affectation of cordiality on each side. Prize-fighters shake hands ere they double them up into catapults for each other's heads, but the embrace here was rather more like the kiss the victim on the scaffold bestows upon his executioner.

Seated side by side on the sofa for a few minutes, neither uttered a word; at last she said, in a calm, low voice, "We had hoped to see you before this—he looked anxiously for your coming."

Beecher heaved a heavy sigh: in that unhappy delay was comprised all the story of his calamities. And how to begin—how to open the narrative?

"I wrote as many as five letters," resumed she, "some addressed to Fordyce's, others to the care of Mr. Davenport Dunn."

"Not one of them ever reached me."

"Very strange, indeed," said she, with a smile of faintest incredulity; "letters so seldom miscarry now-a-days. Stranger still, that none of your other correspondents should have apprised you of your brother's state; there was ample time to have done it."

"I know nothing of it. I vow to Heaven I had not the slightest suspicion of it!"

"Telegraphs, too, are active agencies in these days, and I wrote to Fordyce to use every exertion to acquaint you."

"I can only repeat what I have said already, that I was utterly ignorant of everything till I arrived at Baden; there, I accidentally met Twining——"

"Spicer told me about it," said she, abruptly, as though it was not necessary to discuss any point conceded on both sides. "Your coming," continued she, "was all the more eagerly looked for, because it was necessary you should be, so far as possible, prepared for the suit we are threatened with; actions at law for ejectments on title are already announced, and great—the very greatest—inconvenience has resulted for want of formal instructions on your part."

"Is the thing really serious, Georgy?" asked he, with an unfeigned anxiety of manner.

"If you only will take the trouble of reading Fordyce's two last letters—they are very long, I confess, and somewhat difficult to understand—you will at least see that his opinion is the reverse of favourable. In fact he thinks the English estates are gone."

"Oh, Georgy, dearest! but *you* don't believe that?"

"The Irish Barony and certain lands in Cork," resumed she, calmly, "are not included in the demand they profess to make; nor, of course, have they any claim as to the estates purchased by Lord Lackington through Mr. Dunn."

"But the title?"

"The Viscounty goes with the English property."

"Good Heavens! a title we have held undisturbed, unquestioned, since Edward the Third's time. I cannot bring myself to conceive it!"

"Great reverses of condition can be borne with dignity when they are not of our own incurring," said she, with a stern and pointed significance.

"I'm afraid I cannot boast of possessing all your philosophy," said he, touchily.

"So much the worse. You would need it, and even more, too, if all that I have heard be true."

There was no mistaking this inference, and Beecher only hesitated whether he should accept battle at once, or wait for another broadside.

"Not but," broke she in, "if you could assure me that the rumours were untrue—that *you* have been calumniated, and I misinformed—if, I say, you were enabled to do this, the tidings would help greatly to sustain me through this season of trouble."

"You must speak more plainly, Georgina, if I am to understand you."

"Are you married, Annesley?" said she, abruptly.

"Yes. I hope I am of an age to enter the holy estate without leave from my relations."

"It is true, then?" said she, with a deep, full voice.

"Perfectly true. And then?" There was an open defiance in this tone of questioning which seemed actually to sting her.

"And then?" repeated she, after him—"and then?" You are right to say, 'and then?'—if that means, 'What next?'"

Beecher turned pale and red, as fear and passion swayed him alternately; but he never spoke.

"Is it really a marriage?" broke she in again, "or is it some mockery enacted by a degraded priest, and through the collusion of some scheming sharpers. Oh, Annesley! tell me frankly how you have been tricked into this ignominious contract!" And her accents, as she spoke this, assumed a tone of imploring affection that actually moved him. To this a sense of offended dignity quickly succeeded with him, and he said:

"I cannot permit you to continue in this strain; I am rightfully, legally married, and the lady who shares my lot is as much the Viscountess Lackington as you are."

She covered her face with both her hands, and sat thus for several minutes.

"Perhaps it is all for the best," muttered she, in a low but audible accent—"perhaps it is all for the best. Loss of rank, station, and name will fall the more lightly on those who so little understood how to maintain them with dignity."

"And if I am threatened with the loss of my title and fortune," cried Beecher, passionately, "is it exactly the time to heap these insults on me?"

Partly from the firmness of his manner as he uttered these words, partly that they were not devoid of truthful meaning, she accepted the reproof almost submissively.

"You must go over to England at once, Beecher," said she, calmly. "You must place yourself immediately in Fordyce's hands, and secure the best advice the Bar affords. I would go with you myself, but that——" The deep flush that spread over Beecher's face as she paused here made the moment one of intense pain to each. "No matter," resumed she; "there is only one danger I would warn you against. You dropped the word 'compromise;' now, Annesley, let nothing induce you to descend to this. Such a suggestion could only have come from

those whose habits of life accept expediency in lieu of principle. Maintain your rights proudly and defiantly so long as they pertain to you; if law should at last declare that we are only usurpers——” She tried to finish, but the words seemed as if they would choke her, and after an effort almost convulsive she burst into tears. Scarcely less moved, Beecher covered his face with his hands and turned away.

“I will do whatever you advise me, Georgina,” said he, at length, as he seated himself on the sofa at her side. “If you say I ought to go to England, I’ll set off at once.”

“Yes: you must be in London; you must be where you can have daily, hourly access to your lawyers; but you must also determine that this contest shall be decided by law, and law alone. I cannot, will not, believe that your rights are invalid. I feel assured that the House of Lords will maintain the cause of an acknowledged member of their order against the claims of an obscure pretender. This sympathy, however, will only be with you so long as you are true to yourself. Let the word ‘compromise’ be but uttered, and the generous sentiment will be withdrawn; therefore, Annesley”—here she dropped her voice, and spoke more impressively—“therefore, I should say, go over to England *alone*; be free to exercise untrammelled your own calm judgment—keep your residence a secret from all save your law advisers—see none else.”

* You mean, then, that I should go without my wife?”

“Yes!” said she coldly; “if she accompany you, her friends, her father, with whom she will of course correspond, will know of your whereabouts and flock round you with their unsafe counsels; this is most to be avoided.”

“But how is it to be managed, Georgina; she cannot surely stop here, at an hotel too, while I am away in England?”

“I see nothing against such an arrangement; not having had the pleasure of seeing and knowing Lady Lackington, I am unable to guess any valid reasons against this plan. Is she young?”

“Not twenty.”

“Handsome, of course?” said she, with a slight but supercilious curl of the lip.

“Very handsome—beautiful,” answered he, but in a voice that denoted no rapture.

Lady Lackington mused for a moment or two; it seemed as if she were discussing within her own mind a problem, stating and answering objections as they arose, for she muttered such

broken words as, "Dangerous, of course—in Rome especially—but impossible for her to go to England—all her relations—anything better than that—must make the best of it;" then, turning to Beecher with an air of one whose determination was taken, she said: "She must stay with me till you return." Before he had rallied from his surprise at this resolution, she added, "Come over to tea this evening, and let me see her."

Beecher pressed her hand cordially, as though to imply a gratitude above words; but in reality he turned away to conceal all the emotions this new position of difficulty occasioned, merely calling out, "We'll come very early," as he departed.

Lizzy heard that Spicer was to be their guest at dinner, and they themselves to take tea with the Viscountess Lackington, with equal indifference. She had scarcely *seen* Mr. Spicer, and was not over pleased with her brief impression; of her Ladyship she had only *heard*, but even that much had not inspired her to anticipate a pleasant meeting.

There was, however, in her husband's manner, a sort of fidgety anxiety that showed he attached to the coming interview an amount of importance she could by no means understand. He continued to throw out such hints as to "Georgina's notions" on this or that point; and, while affecting a half ridicule, really showed how seriously he regarded them. Even to Lizzy's dress his cares extended; and he told her to be mindful that nothing in her costume should attract special criticism or remark.

Beecher was far more uneasy than even his looks betrayed. He dreaded to dwell upon the haughty demeanour his sister-in-law would so certainly assume, and the sort of inspection to which his wife was to be subjected. In his heart he wished that Lizzy had been less beautiful, less attractive, or as he ungraciously styled it to himself, "less showy." He well knew how damaging would all her brilliant qualities become to the eyes of one, herself a belle and a beauty in times past. He discussed over and over with himself whether it might not be better to acquaint Lizzy of the kind of dress parade that awaited her, or leave wholly to chance the events of the interview. For once in his life he took a wise resolve, and said nothing on the matter.

The dinner passed off somewhat heavily—Beecher silent and preoccupied, Lizzy thoughtful and indisposed to converse,

and Spicer vexed, in spite of all his resolutions to the contrary, by what he had insultingly called to himself, "the airs of Grog Davis's daughter;" and yet nothing could be less just than to stigmatise by such a phrase a manner quiet, calm, and unpretentious, and totally removed from all affectation.

For a while Beecher bestowed a watchful attention on Spicer, uneasy lest by some adroit piece of malice he might either irritate Lizzy or lead her covertly into some imprudent disclosures; but he soon saw that it would have required a hardier spirit than Mr. Spicer's to have adventured on impertinence in that quarter, and, lighting his cigar, he sat moodily down by the window to think on the future.

Left with the field thus open Spicer canvassed within himself how best to profit by the opportunity. Should he declare himself an old friend of her father's—his associate and his colleague? Should he dexterously intimate that knowing all about her family and antecedents, she could not do better than secure his friendship? Should he not also slyly suggest that, married to a man like Beecher, the counsels of one prudent and wily as himself would prove invaluable? "Now or never," thought he, as he surveyed her pale features, and interpreted their expression as implying timidity and fear.

"Your first visit to Rome, I believe?" said he, as he searched for a cigar amidst the heap on the table.

A cold assent followed.

"Wonderful place; not merely for its old monuments and ruins, though they are curious too, but its strange society—all nations, and all ranks of each mixed and mingled together: great swells, and snobs, grand ladies, princes, cardinals, and ambassadors, thrown together with artistes, gamblers, and fast ones of either sex—a regular fair of fine company, with plenty of amusement and lots of adventure."

"Indeed!" said she, languidly.

"Just the place your father would like," said he, dropping his voice to a half-whisper.

"In what way, pray?" asked she, quietly.

"Why, in the way of trade, of course," said he, laughing. "For the fine lady part of the matter he'd not care for it—that never was his line of country—but for the young swells that thought themselves sporting characters, for the soft young gents that fancied they could play, Grog was always ready. I ask your pardon for the familiar nickname, but we've known

each other about thirty years. He always called me Ginger. Haven't you heard him speak of old Ginger?"

"Never, Sir."

"Strange that; but perhaps he did not speak of his pals to you?"

"No, never."

"That was so like him. I never saw his equal to hunt over two different kinds of country. He could get on the top of a bus and go down to St. John's-wood, or to Putney, after a whole night at Crawley's, and with an old shooting-jacket and jim-crow on him, and a garden-rake in his hand, you'd never suspect he was the fellow who had cleared out the company and carried off every shilling at billiards and blind-hookey. Poor old Kit, how fond I am of him!"

A stare, whose meaning Spicer could not fathom, was the only reply to the speech.

"And he was so fond of *me*! I was the only one of them all he could trust. He liked Beech—I mean his Lordship there; he was always attached to him, but whenever it was really a touch-and-go thing, a nice operation, then he'd say, 'Where's Ginger?—give me Ginger!' The adventures we've had together would make a book; and do you know that more than once I thought of writing them, or getting a fellow to write them, for it's all the same. I'd have called it 'Grog and Ginger.' Wouldn't that take?"

She made no reply; her face was, perhaps, a thought paler, but unchanged in expression.

"And then the scenes we've gone through!—dangerous enough some of them; he rather liked that, and *I* own it never was my taste."

"I am surprised to hear you say so, Sir," said she, in a low, but very distinct voice; "I'd have imagined exactly the reverse."

"Indeed! and may I make so bold as to ask why?"

"Simply, Sir, that a gentleman so worldly-wise as yourself must always be supposed to calculate eventualities, and not incur, willingly at least, those he has no mind for. To be plain, Sir, I'm at a loss to understand how one not fond of peril should hazard the chance of being thrown out of a window—don't start, I'm only a woman, and cannot do it, nor, though I have rung for the servant, am I going to order *him*. For this time it shall be the door." And, rising proudly, she walked towards the window, but ere she reached it, Spicer was gone.

"What's become of Spicer, Lizzy?" said Beecher, indolently, as his eyes traversed the room in search of him.

"He has taken his leave," said she, in a voice as careless.

"He's tiresome, I think," yawned he; "at least, I find him so."

She made no reply, but sat down to compose her thoughts, somewhat ruffled by the late scene.

"Ain't it time to order the carriage? I told Georgy we'd come early," added he after a pause.

"I almost think I'll not go to-night," said she, in a low voice.

"Not go! You don't mean that when my sister-in-law sends you a message to come and see her that you'll refuse!" cried he, in a mixture of anger and astonishment.

"I'm afraid I could be guilty of so great an enormity," said she, smiling superciliously.

"It's exactly the word for it, whatever you may think," said he, doggedly. "All I can say is, that you don't know Georgina, or you'd never have dreamt of it."

"In that case, it is better, I *should* know her; so I'll get my bonnet and shawl at once."

She was back in the room in a moment, and they set out for the Palazzo Gondi.

What would not Beecher have given, as they drove along, for courage to counsel and advise her—to admonish as to this, and caution as to that. And yet he did not dare to utter a word, and she was as silent.

It would not be very easy to say exactly what sort of person Lady Georgina expected in her sister-in-law; indeed, she had pictured her in so many shapes to herself that there was not an incongruity omitted in the composition, and she fancied her bold, daring, timid, awkward, impertinent, and shy alternately, and, in this conflict of anticipation it was that Lizzy entered. So utterly overcome was Lady Georgina by astonishment, that she actually advanced to meet her in some confusion, and then, taking her hand, led her to a seat on the sofa beside her.

While the ordinary interchange of commonplaces went on—and nothing could be more ordinary or commonplace than the words of their greeting—each calmly surveyed the other. What thoughts passed in their minds, what inferences were drawn, and what conclusions formed in this moment, it is not for me to guess. To women alone pertains that marvellous freemasonry that scans character at a glance, and investigates the sincerity of a disposition and the value of a lace flounce with the same practised facility. If Lady Georgina was astonished by the striking

beauty of her sister-in-law, she was amazed still more by her manner and her tone. Where could she have learned that graceful repose—that simplicity, which is the very highest art? Where and how had she caught up that gentle quietude which breathes like a balmy odour over the well-bred world? How had she acquired that subtlety by which wit is made to sparkle and never to startle? and what training had told her how to weave through all she said the flattery of a wish to please?

Woman of the world as she was, Lady Lackington had seen no such marvel as this. It was no detraction from its merit that it might be all acting, for it was still “high art.” Not a fault could she detect in look, gesture, or tone, and yet all seemed as easy and unstudied as possible. Her Ladyship knew well that the practice of society confers all these advantages; but here was one who had never mixed with the world, who, by her own confession, “knew no one,” and yet was a mistress of every art that rules society. Lady Georgina had yet to learn that there are instincts stronger than all experience, and that, in the common intercourse of life, Tact is Genius.

Though Lizzy was far more deeply versed in every theme on which it was her Ladyship’s pleasure to talk than herself—though she knew more of painting, of music, and of literature, than the Viscountess, she still seemed like one gleaning impressions as they conversed, and at each moment acquiring nearer and clearer views; and yet even this flattery was so nicely modulated that it escaped detection.

There was a mystery in the case her Ladyship determined to fathom. “No woman of her class,” as she phrased it, could have been thus trained without some specific object. The stage had latterly been used as a sort of show mart where young girls display their attractive graces, at times with immense success. Could this have been the goal for which she had been destined? She adroitly turned the conversation to that topic, but Lizzy’s answers soon negatived the suspicion: Governesses, too, were all-accomplished in these days; but here there was less of acquirement exhibited than of all the little arts and devices of society.

“Is my trial nearly over?” whispered Lizzy in Beecher’s ear as he passed beside her chair. “I’d rather hear a verdict of Guilty at once than to submit to further examining.”

A look of caution, most imploringly given, was all his reply.

Though Lady Lackington had neither heard question nor answer, her quick glance had penetrated something like a

meaning in them, and her lip curled impatiently as she said to Beecher, "Have you spoke to Lady Lackington of our plans for her—I mean during your absence?"

He muttered a sullen "No, not yet," and turned away.

"It was an arrangement that will, I hope, meet your approval," said Lady Georgina, half coldly, "since Beecher, must go over to England for some weeks, and as you could not with either comfort or propriety remain alone in your hotel, our plan was that you should come here."

Lizzy merely turned her eyes on Beecher, but there was that in their expression that plainly said, "Is this *your* resolve?" He only moved away and did not speak.

"Not but if any of your own family," continued Lady Lackington, "could come out here, and that you might prefer *their* company—that would be an arrangement equally satisfactory. Is such an event likely?"

"Nothing less so, my Lady," said Lizzy. "My father has affairs of urgency to treat at this moment."

"Oh, I did not exactly allude to your father—you might have sisters."

"I have none."

"An aunt, perhaps?"

"I never heard of one."

"Lizzy, you are aware, Georgina," broke in Beecher, whose voice trembled at every word, "was brought up abroad—she never saw any of her family."

"How strange! I might even say, how unfortunate!" sighed her Ladyship, superciliously.

"Stranger, and more unfortunate still, your Ladyship would perhaps say, if I were to tell you that I never so much as heard of them."

"I am not certainly prepared to say that the circumstance is one to be boastful of," said Lady Lackington, who resented the look of haughty defiance of the other.

"I assure your Ladyship that you are mistaken in attributing to me such a sentiment. I have nothing of which to be boastful."

"Your present position, Lady Lackington, might inspire a very natural degree of pride."

"It has not done so yet, my Lady. My experience of the elevated class to which I have been raised has been too brief to impress me; a wider knowledge will probably supply this void."

"And yet," said Lady Georgina, sarcastically, "it is something—the change from Miss Davis to the Viscountess Lackington."

"When that change becomes more real, more actual, my Lady," said Lizzy, boldly, "it will assuredly bear its fruits; when, in being reminded of what I was, and whence I came, I can only detect the envious malevolence that would taunt me with what is no fault of mine, but a mere accident of fortune—when I hear these things with calm composure, and, in my rank as a Peeress, feel the equal of those who would disparage me, then, indeed, I may be proud."

"Such a day may never come," said Lady Georgina, coldly.

"Very possibly, my Lady. It has cost me no effort to win this station you seem to prize so highly; it will not exact one to forego all its great advantages."

"What a young lady to be so old a philosopher! I'm sure Lord Lackington never so much as suspected the wisdom he acquired in his wife. It may, however, be a family trait."

"My father was so far wise, my Lady, that he warned me of the reception that awaited me in my new station, but in his ignorance of that great world he gave me rather to believe that I should meet insinuated slights and covert impertinences than open insults. Perhaps I owe it to my vulgar origin that I really like the last the best; at least they show me that my enemies are not formidable."

"Your remarks have convinced me that it would be quite superfluous in me to offer my protection to a lady so conversant with life and the world."

"They will at least serve to show your Ladyship that I would not have accepted the protection."

"But Lizzy, dearest, you don't know what you are saying. Lady Georgina can establish your position in society as none other can."

"I mean to do that without aid."

"Just as her father, Mr. Grog, would force his way into the stand-house," whispered Lady Lackington, but still loud enough for Lizzy to overhear.

"Not exactly as your Ladyship would illustrate it," said Lizzy, smiling; "but in seeing the amount of those gifts which have won the suffrages of society, I own that I am not discouraged. I am told," said she, with a great air of artlessness, "that no one is more popular than your Ladyship."

Lady Lackington arose, and stared at her with a look of

open insolence, and then turning, whispered something in Beecher's ear.

"After all," muttered he, "*she* did not begin it. Get your shawl, Lizzy," added he, aloud, "my sister keeps early hours, and we must not break in on them."

Lady Lackington and Lizzy curtseyed to each other like ladies of high comedy; it seemed, indeed, a sort of rivalry whose reverence should be most formal and most deferential.

"Haven't you gone and done it!" cried Beecher, as they gained the street. "Georgina will never forget this so long as she lives."

"And if she did I'd take care to refresh her memory," said Lizzy, laughing; and the mellow sounds rang out as if from a heart that never knew a care.

"I shall require to set out for England to-morrow," said Beecher, moodily, so soon as they had reached the hotel. The speech was uttered to induce a rejoinder, but she made none.

"And probably be absent for several weeks," added he.

Still she never spoke, but seemed busily examining the embroidered coronet on the corner of her handkerchief.

"And as circumstances require—I mean, as I shall be obliged to go alone—and as it would be highly inconvenient, not to say unusual, for a young married woman, more especially in the rank you occupy, to remain in an hotel alone without friends or relatives, we have thought—that is, Georgy and I have considered—that you should stay with her."

Lizzy only smiled, but what that strange smile might signify it was far beyond Beecher's skill to read.

"There is only one difficulty in the matter," resumed he, "and as it is a difficulty almost entirely created by yourself, you will naturally be the more ready to rectify it." He waited long enough to provoke a question from her, but she seemed to have no curiosity on the subject, and did not speak.

"I mean," added he, more boldly, "that before accepting my sister's hospitality, you must necessarily make some 'amende' for the manner in which you have just treated her."

"In which *I* treated *her*!" said Lizzy, after him, her utterance being slow and totally passionless.

"Yes, these were my words," said he.

"Have you forgotten how *she* treated *me*?" asked Lizzy, in the same calm tone.

"As to that," said he, with a sort of fidgety confusion—"as to that, you ought to bear in mind who she is—what she is—

and then it's Georgy's way; even among her equals—those well born as herself—she has always been permitted to exercise a certain sort of sway; in fact, the world of fashion has decreed her a sort of eminence. You cannot understand these things yet, though you may do so, one day or other. In a word, *she* can do what *you* cannot, and must not, and the sooner you know it the better."

"And what is it you propose that I should do?" asked she, with seeming innocence.

"Write her a note—brief if you like, but very civil—full of excuses for anything that may have given her offence; say all about your ignorance of life, newness to the world, and so on; declare your readiness to accept any suggestions she will kindly give you for future conduct—for she knows society like a book—and conclude by assuring her—Well!" cried he, suddenly, for she had started from him so abruptly that he forgot his dictation.

"Go on—go on," said she, resuming her calm tone.

"You've put me out," cried he; "I can't remember where I was. Stay—I was saying—What was it? it was something like——"

"Something like 'I'll not do it any more,'" said Lizzy, with a low laugh, while at the same instant she opened her writing-desk and sat down to write.

Now, although Beecher would have preferred seeing her accept this lesson with more show of humility, he was, on the whole, well satisfied with her submission. He watched her as her pen moved across the paper, and saw that she wrote in a way that indicated calm composure and not passion. The note was quickly finished, and as she was folding it she stopped and said, "But perhaps you might like to read it?"

"Of course I'd like to read it," said he, eagerly, taking it up and reading aloud:

"The Viscountess Lackington having received Lord Lackington's orders to apologise to Georgina, Viscountess Lackington, for certain expressions which may have offended her, willingly accepts the task as one likely to indicate to her Ladyship the propriety of excusing her own conduct to one who had come to claim her kindness and protection."

"And would you presume to send her such a note as this?" cried he, as he crushed it up and flung it into the fire.

"Not now," said she, with a quiet smile.

"Sit down, and then write——"

"I'll not write another," said she, rising. She moved slowly across the room, and as she gained the door she turned and said, "If you don't want Kuffner, I'd be glad to have him here;" and without awaiting his reply, she was gone.

"Haven't I made a precious mess of it?" cried Beecher, as he buried his head between his hands, and sat down before the fire.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MRS. SEACOLE'S.

IN a dense fog, and under a thin cold rain, the *Tigris* steamed slowly into the harbour of Balaklava. She had been chartered by the Government, and sent out with some seventy thousand pair of shoes, and other like indispensables for an army much in want, but destined to be ultimately re-despatched to Constantinople—some grave omissions in red tapery having been discovered—whereby she and the shoes remained till the conclusion of the war, when the shoes were sold to the Russians, and the ship returned to England.

Our concern is not, however, with the ship or the shoes, or the patent barley, the potted meats, or the "printed instructions" with which she was copiously provided, but with two passengers who had come up in her from Constantinople, and had, in a manner, struck up a sort of intimacy by the way. They were each of them men rather advanced in life—somewhat ordinary in appearance, of that common place turn in look, dress, and bearing that rarely possesses attraction for the better-off class of travellers, but, by the force of a grand law of compensations, as certainly disposes them to fraternise with each other. There are unquestionably some very powerful affinities which draw together men past the prime of life, when they wear bad hats, seedy black coats very wide in the skirt, and Berlin gloves. It is not alone that if they smoke the tobacco is of the same coarse kind, and that brandy-and-water is a fountain where they frequently meet, but there are mysterious points of agreement about them which develop rapidly into close intimacy, and would even rise to friendship if either of them was capable of such a weakness.

They had met casually at "Miseri's" at Constantinople, and agreed to go up the Black Sea together. Now, though assuredly any common observer passing them might not readily be able to distinguish one from the other again, both being fat, broad-shouldered, vulgar-looking men of about fifty-four, or more, yet each was a sort of puzzle to the other, and in the curiosity thus inspired, there grew up a bond between them that actually served to unite them.

If we forbore any attempt at mystification with our valued reader in an early stage of this history, it is not now, that we draw to its close, we would affect any secrecy. Let us, therefore, at once announce the travellers by their names, one being Terry Driscoll, the other the Reverend Paul Classon.

Driscoll had dropped hints—vague hints only—that he had come out to look after a nephew of his, a kind of scapegrace who was always in trouble, but in what regiment he served, or where, or whether he was yet alive, or had been broke and sent home, were all little casualties which he contemplated and discussed with a strange amount of composure. As for Paul, without ever entering directly upon the personal question, he suffered his ministerial character to ooze slowly out, and left it to be surmised that he was a gentleman of the press, unengaged, and a Christian minister, unattached.

Not that these personal facts were declared in the abrupt manner they are here given to the reader. Far from it; they merely loomed through the haze of their discourse as, walking the deck for hours, they canvassed the war and its objects, and its probable results. Upon all these themes they agreed wonderfully, each being fully satisfied that the whole campaign was a only a well-concerted roguery—a scheme for the dismemberment of Turkey, when she had been sufficiently debilitated by the burden of an expensive contest to make all resistance impossible. Heaven knows if either of them seriously believed this. At all events, they said it to each other, and so often, so circumstantially, and so energetically, that it would be very rash in us to entertain a doubt of their sincerity.

"I have been recommended to a house kept by a Mrs. Seacole," said Classon, as they landed on the busy quay, where soldiers, and sailors, and land-transport men, with Turks, Wallachs, Tartars, and Greeks, were performing a small Babel of their own.

"God help me!" exclaimed Terry, plaintively, "I'm like a new-born child here; I know nobody, nor how to ask for anything."

"Come along with me, then. There are worse couriers than Paul Classon." And bustling his way through the crowd, his Reverence shouldered his carpet-bag, and pushed forward.

It was indeed a rare good fortune for Terry to have fallen upon a fellow traveller so gifted and so accomplished; for not only did Paul seem a perfect polyglot, but he possessed that peculiar bustling activity your regular travellers acquires, by which, on his very entrance into an inn, he assumes the position less of guest than of one in authority and in administration. And so now Paul had speedily investigated the resources of the establishment, and ordered an excellent supper, while poor Driscoll was still pottering about his room, or vainly endeavouring to uncord a portmanteau which a sailor had fastened more ingeniously than necessary.

"I wish I knew what he was," muttered Terry to himself. "He'd be the very man to help me in this business, if I could trust him."

Was it a strange coincidence that at the same moment Paul Classon should be saying to himself, "That fellow's simplicity would be invaluable if I could only enlist him in our cause. He is a fool well worth two wise men at this conjuncture."

The sort of coffee-room where they supped was densely crowded by soldiers, sailors, and civilians of every imaginable class and condition. Bronzed, weather-beaten captains, come off duty for a good dinner and a bottle of real wine at Mother Seacole's, now mingled with freshly arrived subs, who had never even seen their regiments; surgeons, commissaries, naval lieutenants, Queen's messengers, and army chaplains, were all there, talking away, without previous acquaintance with each other, in all the frankness of men who felt absolved from the rule of ordinary etiquette; and thus, amid discussions of the campaign and its chances, were mingled personal adventures, and even private narratives, all told without the slightest reserve or hesitation: how such a one had got up from his sick-bed, and reported himself well and fit for duty, and how such another had pleaded urgent private affairs to get leave to go home; what a capital pony Watkins had bought for a sovereign, what execrable bitter beer Jones was paying six shillings the bottle for; sailors canvassing the slow advances of landmen, soldiers wondering why the blue-jackets wouldn't "go in" and blow the whole mock fortifications into the air—some boasting, some grumbling, many ridiculing the French, and all cursing the Commissariat.

If opinions were boldly stated, and sentiments declared with

very little regard for any opposition they might create, there was throughout a tone of hearty good-fellowship that could not be mistaken. The jests and the merriment seemed to partake of the same hardy character that marked each day's existence, and many a story was told with a laugh, that could not be repeated at the "Rag," or reported at the Horse Guards. Classon and Driscoll listened eagerly to all that went on around them. They were under the potent spell that affects all men who feel themselves for the first time in a scene of which they have heard much. They were actually in the Crimea. The men around them had actually just come off duty in the trenches: that little dark-bearded fellow had lost his arm in the attack of the Mamelon—that blue-eyed youth, yonder, had led a party in assault on the Cemetery—the jovial knot of fellows near the stove had been "potting" all night at the Russians from a rifle-pit. There was a reality in all these things that imparted a marvellous degree of interest to individuals that might otherwise have seemed commonplace and ordinary.

Amidst the noisy narratives and noisier commentaries of the moment, there seemed one discussion carried on with more than usual warmth. It was as to the precise species of reward that could be accorded to one whose military rank could not entitle him to the "Bath."

"I tell you, Chidley," cried one of the speakers, "if he had been a Frenchman there would have been no end of boasting amongst our amiable allies, and he'd have had Heaven knows what grade of the Legion and a pension besides! Show me the fellow amongst them could have done the feat! I don't speak of the pluck of it—they have plenty of pluck—but where's the rider could have sat his horse over it?"

"What height was it?" asked another, as he leisurely puffed his cigar.

"Some say six feet—call it five, call it four, anything you please—it was to go at a breastwork with two nine-pounders inside, that was the feat—and I say again, I don't know another fellow in the army that would have thought of it but himself!"

"Dick Churchill once jumped into a square and out again!"

A hearty roar of laughter announced the amount of credit vouchsafed to the story, but the speaker, most circumstantially, gave time and place, and cited the names of those who had witnessed the fact.

"Be it all as you say," interposed the first speaker, "Churchill

did a foolhardy thing, without any object or any result; but Conway sabred three gunners with his own hand."

If the story up to this moment had only interested our two travellers by its heroic claims, no sooner was the name of Conway uttered than each started with astonishment. As for Classon, he arose at once, and drawing near the narrator, politely begged to know if the Conway mentioned was a one-armed man?

"The same, Sir—Charley the Smasher, as they used to call him long ago; and, by George, he has earned some right to the title!"

"And he escaped unhurt after all this?" asked Classon.

"No, I never said that; he was almost hacked to pieces, and his horse had four bullets in him and fell dead, after carrying him half way back to our lines."

"And Conway, is he alive? Is he likely to recover?" asked Paul, eagerly.

"The doctors say it is impossible; but Charley himself declares that he has not the slightest intention of dying, and the chances are, he'll keep his word."

"Dear me! only think of that!" muttered Driscoll, as with a look of intense simplicity he listened to this discourse. "And where is he now, Sir, if I might make so bould?"

"He's up at the Monastery of St. George, about eight miles off."

"The Lord give him health and strength to go and fight the Russians again!" said Terry; and the speech, uttered in a tone so natural and so simple, was heard with a general laugh.

"Come over to this table, my old buck, and we'll drink that toast in a bumper!" cried one of the officers; and with many a bashful expression of pleasure Mr. Driscoll accepted the invitation.

"Won't your friend join us?" asked another, looking towards Classon.

"I must, however reluctantly, decline, gentlemen," said Paul, blandly. "I cannot indulge like my respected friend here—I stand in need of rest and repose."

"He doesn't look a very delicate subject, notwithstanding," said a subaltern, as Classon retired.

"There's no judging from appearances," observed Driscoll. "You'd think me a strong man, but I'm weak as a child. There's nothing left of me since I had the 'faver,' and I'll tell you how it happened."

CHAPTER XCIV.

THE CONVENT OF ST. GEORGE.

DAY broke heavily and dull through the massively barred windows of the Convent of St. George, and dimly discovered a vast crowd assembled in the great hall of waiting: officers—sailor and soldier—come to inquire news of wounded comrades, camp-followers, suttlers, surgeons, araba-drivers, Tartar guides, hospital nurses, newspaper correspondents, Jew money-changers, being only some of the varieties in that great and motley crowd.

Two immense fireplaces threw a ruddy glare over two wide semicircles of human faces before them, but here and there throughout the hall knots and groups were gathered, engaged in deep and earnest converse. Occasionally one speaker occupied the attention of a listening group, but more generally there was a sort of discussion in which parties suggested this or that explanation, and so supplied some piece of omitted intelligence.

It is to this dropping and broken discourse of one of these small gatherings that I would now draw my reader's attention. The group consisted of nigh a dozen persons, of whom a staff-officer and a naval captain were the principal speakers.

"My own opinion is," said the former, "that if the personal episodes of this war come ever to be written, they will be found infinitely more strange and interesting than all the great achievements of the campaign. I ask you, for instance, where is there anything like this very case? A wounded soldier, half cut to pieces by the enemy, is carried to the rear to hear that his claim to a Peerage has just been established, and that he has only to get well again to enjoy fifteen thousand a year."

"The way the tidings reach him is yet stranger," broke in another.

“What is *your* version of that?”

“It is the correct one, I promise you,” rejoined he; “I had it from Colthorpe, who was present. When the London lawyer—I don’t know his name—reached Balaklava, he discovered, to his horror, that Conway was in the front; and when the fellow summons pluck enough to move on to head-quarters, he learns that Charley has just gone out with a party of eight, openly declaring they mean to do something before they come back. Up to this, the man of parchment has studiously kept his secret; in fact, the general belief about him was that he was charged with a writ, or some such confounded thing, against the poor Smasher, and, of course, the impression contributed little to secure him a polite reception. Now, however, all his calm and prudential reserve is gone, and he rushes madly in to the General’s tent, where the General is at breakfast with all the staff and several guests, and, with the air of a man secure of his position, he flings down upon the table a letter to the General Commanding-in-chief from a Minister of State, saying, ‘There, Sir! may I reckon upon your assistance?’ It was some time before the General could quite persuade himself that the man was in his senses, he talked away so wildly and incoherently, repeatedly saying, ‘I throw it all upon you, Sir. Remember, Sir, I take none of the responsibility—none!’

“‘I wish you would kindly inform me as to the precise service you expect at my hands, Sir,’ said the General, somewhat haughtily.

“‘To have this document deposited in the hands of Lieutenant Charles Conway, Sir,’ said he pompously, laying down a heavily sealed package; ‘to convey to him the news that his claim to the title and estates of his family has been declared perfect; that before he can reach England he will be Lord Viscount Lackington and Conway.’

“‘Bad news from the front, Sir,’ said an aide-de-camp, breaking in. ‘After a successful attack on a small redoubt near the Cemetery, two squadrons of the —th have been surprised, and nearly all cut up. Conway, they say, killed.’

“‘No, not killed,’ broke in another; ‘badly wounded, and left behind.’

“There was, as you may imagine, very little thought bestowed on the lawyer after this. Indeed, the party was scattered almost immediately, and Colthorpe was just going out, when one of Miss Nightingale’s ladies said to him, ‘Will you do me a great favour, Major Colthorpe—a very great favour? It is to

let me have my saddle put on your grey charger for half an hour.' Colly says, if she hadn't been the very prettiest girl he had ever seen since they left England, he'd have shirked it, but he could not; and in less than ten minutes there she was, cantering away through the tents and heading straight for the front. It was not, however, only the grey Arab she carried off, but the great letter of the lawyer was gone too; and so now every one knew at once she was away to the front."

"And after that—after that?" asked three or four together, as the narrator paused.

"After that," resumed he, "there is little to be told. Colthorpe's Arab galloped back with a ball in his counter, and the saddle torn to rags with shot. The girl has not been heard of."

"I can supply this portion of the story," said a young fellow, with his arm in a sling. "She had come up with Conway, whom they had placed on a horse, and were leading him back to the lines, when a Russian skirmishing party swept past and carried the girl off, and she is now in Sebastopol, under the care of the Countess Woronzoff."

"And Conway?"

"Conway's here; and though he has, between shot and sabre-cuts, eight severe wounds, they say that, but for his anxiety about this girl's fate, his chances of recovery are not so bad. Here comes Dr. Raikes, however, who could give us the latest tidings of him."

The gentleman thus alluded to moved hastily down the hall, followed by a numerous train of assistants, to whom he gave his orders as he went. He continued at the same time to open and run his eyes over various letters which an assistant handed to him one by one.

"I will not be tormented with these requests, Parkes," said he, peremptorily. "You are to refuse all applications to see patients who are not in the convalescent wards. These interviews have invariably one effect—they double *our* labour here."

By this time the doctor was hemmed closely in by a dense crowd, eagerly asking for news of some dear friend or kinsman. A brief "Badly," "Better," "Sinking," "Won't do," were in general the extent of his replies, but in no case did he ever seem at a loss as to the name or circumstance of the individual alluded to.

And now at last the great hall began to thin. Wrapping themselves well in their warm cloaks, securing the hoods tightly

over their heads, men set out in twos and threes, on foot, on horseback, or in arabas, some for the camp, some for Balaklava, and some for the far-away quarter at the extreme right, near the Tchernaya. A heavy snow was falling, and a cold and cutting wind came over the Black Sea, and howled drearily along the vaulted corridors of the old Convent.

Matter enough for story was there beneath that venerable roof! It was the week after the memorable fight of Inkermann, and some of the best blood of Britain was ebbing in those dimly-lighted cells, whose echoes gave back heart-sick sighs for home from lips that were soon to be mute for ever. There are unlucky days in the calendar of medicine—days when the convalescent makes no progress, and the sick man grows worse—when medicaments seem mulcted of half their efficacy, and disastrous chances abound. Doctors rarely reject the influence of this superstition, but accept it with calm resignation.

Such, at least, seemed the spirit in which two army surgeons now discussed the events of the day, as they walked briskly for exercise along one of the corridors of the Convent.

"We shall have a gloomy report to send in to-morrow, Parkes," said the elder. "Not one of these late operation cases will recover. Hopeton is sinking fast; Malcolm's wound has put on a treacherous appearance; that compound fracture shows signs of gangrene; and there's Conway, we all thought so well of last night, going rapidly, as though from some internal hemorrhage."

"Poor fellow! it's rather hard to die just when he has arrived at so much to live for. You know that he is to have a Peerage."

"So he told me himself. He said laughingly to me, 'Becknell, my boy, be careful, you are cutting up no common sort of fellow; it's all lordly flesh and blood here!' We were afraid the news might over-excite him, but he took it as easily as possible, and only said, 'How happy it will make my poor mother;' and, after a moment, 'If I only get back to tell it to her!'"

"A civilian below," said an hospital-sergeant, "wishes to see Mr. Conway."

"Can't be—say so," was the curt reply, as the doctor, tore, without reading, the piece of paper on which a name was written.

"The lawyer, I have no doubt," said the other; "as if the poor fellow could care to hear of title-deeds and rent-rolls now."

He'd rather have twenty drops of morphine than know that his estate covered half a county."

The sergeant waited for a second or two to see if the doctor should reconsider his reply, and then respectfully retired. The stranger, during the short interval of absence, had denuded himself of great-coat and snow-shoes, and was briskly chafing his hands before the fire.

"Well, sergeant, may I see him?" asked he, eagerly.

"No. The doctors won't permit it."

"You didn't tell them who I was, then, that's the reason. You didn't say I was the confidential agent of his family, charged with a most important communication?"

"If I didn't, it was, perhaps, because I didn't know it," said the man, laughing.

"Well, then, go back at once and say that I've come out special—that I must see him—that the ten minutes I'll stay will save years and years of law and chancery—and that"—here he dropped his voice—"there's a hundred pounds here for the same minutes."

"You'd better keep that secret to yourself, my good friend," interposed the sergeant, stiffly.

"Well, so I will, if you recommend it," said the other, submissively; "but, surely, a ten-pound note would do you no harm yourself, sergeant."

An insolent laugh was the only answer the other vouchsafed, as he lighted his cigar and sat down before the fire.

"They won't let me see him for the mischief it might do him," resumed the other, "and little they know that what I have to tell him might be the saving of his life."

"How so?"

"Just that I've news for him here that would make a man a'most get out of his coffin—news that would do more to cure him than all the doctors in Europe. There's papers in that bag there that only wants his name to them to be worth thousands and thousands of pounds, and if he dies without signing them there's nothing but ruin to come of it; and when I said a ten-pound note awhile ago to you, it was a hundred gold sovereigns I meant, counted into the hollow of your fist, just as you sat there. See now, show me your hand."

As if in a sort of jocular pantomime, the man held out his hand, and the other, taking a strong leather purse from his pocket, proceeded to untie the string, fastened with many a cunning device. At length it was opened, and, emptying out a

quantity of its contents into one hand, he began to deposit the pieces, one by one, in the other's palm. "One, two, three, four," went he on, leisurely, till the last sovereign dropped from his fingers with the words "one hundred!"

Secret and safe as the bargain seemed, a pair of keen eyes peering through the half snowed-up window had watched the whole negotiation, following the sergeant's fingers as the closed upon the gold and deposited it within his pocket.

"Wait here, and I'll see what can be done by-and-by," said the sergeant, as he moved away.

Scarcely was the stranger left alone than the door opened, and a man entered, shaking the snow from his heavy boots and his long capote.

"So, my worthy friend," cried he, in a rich, soft voice, "you stole a march on me—moved off without beat of drum, and took up a position before I was stirring!"

"Ah, my reverend friend, *you* here!" said the other, in evident confusion. "I never so much as suspected you were coming in this direction."

Paul Classon and Terry Driscoll stared long and significantly at each other. Of all those silences, which are more eloquent than words, none can equal that interval in which two consummate knaves exchange glances of recognition, so complete an appreciation is there of each other's gifts, such an honest, unaffected, frank interchange of admiration.

"You are a clever fellow, Driscoll, you are!" said Paul, admiringly.

"No, no. The Lord help me, I'm a poor crayture," said Terry, shaking his head despondingly.

"Don't believe it, man—don't believe it," said Paul, clapping him on the shoulder; "you have great natural gifts. Your face alone is worth a thousand a year, and you have a shuffling, shambling way of coming into a room that's better than an account at Coutts's. Joe Norris used to say that a slight palsy he had in one hand was worth twelve hundred a year to him at billiards alone."

"What a droll man you are, Mr. Classon," said Terry, wiping his eyes as he laughed. And again they looked at each other long and curiously.

"Driscoll," said Paul, after a considerable pause, "on which side do you hold your brief?"

"My brief! God knows it's little I know about briefs and parchments," sighed Terry, heavily.

"Come, come, man, what's the use of fencing. I see your hand; I know every trump in it."

Driscoll shook his head, and muttered something about the "fayer that destroyed him entirely."

"Ah!" sighed Classon, "I cannot well picture to my mind what you might have been anterior to that calamity, but what remains is still remarkable—very remarkable. And now I ask again, on which side are you engaged?"

"Dear me—dear me!" groaned out Terry; "it's a terrible world we live in!"

"Truly and well observed, Driscoll. Life is nothing but a long and harassing journey, with accidents at every stage, and mischances at every halt; meanwhile, for whom do you act?"

The door at the end of the long gallery was slightly and noiselessly opened at this instant, and a signal with a hand caught Driscoll's attention. Rapid and stealthy as was the motion, Classon turned hastily round and detected it.

"Sit still, Driscoll," said he, smiling, "and let us talk this matter over like men of sense and business. It's clear enough, my worthy friend, that neither you nor I are rich men."

Driscoll sighed an assent.

"That, on the contrary, we are poor, struggling, hard-toiling fellows, mortgaging the good talents Fortune has blessed us with to men who have been born to inferior gifts but better opportunities."

Another sigh from Terry.

"You and I, as I have observed, have been deputed out here to play a certain game. Let us be, therefore, not opponents, but partners. One side only can win, let us both be at that side."

Again Terry sighed, but more faintly than before.

"Besides," said Classon, rising, and turning his back to the fire, while he stuck his hands in his pockets, "I'm an excellent colleague, and, unless the world wrongs me, a most inveterate enemy."

"Will he live, do you think?" said Terry, with a gesture of his thumb to indicate him of whom he spoke.

"No; impossible," said Classon, confidently; "he stands in the report fatally wounded, and I have it confidentially that there's not a chance for him."

"And his claim dies with him?"

"That's by no means so sure; at least, we'd be all the safer if we had his papers, Master Driscoll."

"Ay!" said Driscoll, knowingly.

"Now, which of us is to do the job, Driscoll? that's the question. I have my claim to see him, as chaplain to the—I'm not sure of the name of what branch of the service—we'll say the 'Irregular Contingent' Legion. What are *you*, my respected friend?"

"A connexion of the family, on the mother's side," said Terry, with a leer.

"A connexion of the family!" laughed out Classon. "Nothing better."

"But, after all," sighed Terry, despondingly, "there's another fellow before us both—that chap that brought out the news to the camp, Mr. Reggis, from the house of Swindal and Reggis."

"He's cared for already," said Classon, with a grin.

"The Lord protect us! what do you mean?" exclaimed Driscoll, in terror.

"He wanted to find his way out here last night, so I bribed two Chasseurs d'Afrique to guide him. They took him off outside the French advance, and dropped him within five hundred yards of a Cossack picket, so that the worthy practitioner is now snug in Sebastopol. In fact, Driscoll, my boy, I'm—as I said before—an ugly antagonist!"

Terry laughed an assent, but there was little enjoyment in his mirth.

"The girl—one of those hospital ladies," continued Classon—"a certain Miss Kellett, is also a prisoner."

"Miss Kellett!" cried Driscoll, in amazement and terror together. "I know her well, and if she's here she'll outwit us both."

"She's in safe hands this time, let her be as cunning as she will. In fact, my dear Driscoll, the game is our own if we be but true to each other."

"I'm more afraid of that girl than them all," muttered Driscoll.

"Look over those hills yonder, Driscoll, and say if that prison-house be not strong enough to keep her. Mr. Reggis and herself are likely to see Moscow before they visit Cheapside. Remember, however, if the field be our own, it is only for a very brief space of time. Conway is dying. What is to be done must be done quickly; and as there is no time for delay, Driscoll, tell me frankly what is it worth to you?" Terry sneezed and wiped his eyes, and sneezed again—all little artifices to gain time and consider how he should act.

"My instructions are these," said Classon, boldly: "to get

Conway to sign a bond abdicating all claim to certain rights in lieu of a good round sum in hand ; or, if he refuse——”

“Which he certainly would refuse,” broke in Driscoll.

“Well, then, to possess myself of his papers, deeds, letters, whatever they were—make away with them, or with any one holding them. Ay, Driscoll, it is sharp practice, my boy, but we’re just now in a land where sudden death dispenses with a coroner’s inquest, and the keenest inquirer would be puzzled whether the fatal bullet came from a Russian rifle or a Croat carbine. Lend me a helping hand here, and I’ll pledge myself that you are well paid for it. Try and dodge me, and I’ll back myself to beat you at your own game.”

“Here’s an order for one of you gentlemen,” said an hospital orderly, “coming up to see Lieutenant Conway.”

“It is for me,” said Driscoll, eagerly ; “I’m a relation of his.”

“And I am his family chaplain,” said Classon, rising ; “we’ll go together.” And before Driscoll could interpose a word, Paul slipped his arm within the other’s and led him away.

CHAPTER XCV.

SHOWING "HOW WOUNDS ARE HEALED."

ON a low little bed in a small chamber, once a cell of the Convent, Charles Conway lay, pale, bloodless, and breathing heavily. The surgeon's report of that morning called him "mortally wounded," and several of his comrades had already come to bid him farewell. To alleviate in some measure his sufferings, he was propped up with pillows and cushions to a half-sitting posture, and so placed, that his gaze could rest upon the open sea, which lay calm and waveless beneath his window; but even on this his eyes wandered vaguely, as though already all fixity of thought was fled, and that the world and its scenes had ceased to move or interest him. He was in that state of exhaustion which follows great loss of blood, and in which the brain wanders dreamily and incoherently, though ready at any sudden question to arouse itself to an effort of right reason.

A faint, sad smile, a little nod, a gesture of the hand, were tokens that one by one his comrade's recorded of their last interview with him; and now all were gone, and he was alone. A low murmur of voices at his door bespoke several persons in earnest conversation, but the sounds never reached the ears of the sick man.

"He spoke of making a will, then?" said Classon, in a whisper.

"Yes, Sir," replied the sergeant. "He asked several times if there was not some one who could take down his wishes in writing, and let him sign it before witnesses."

"That will do admirably," said Paul, pushing his way into the room, closely followed by Terry Driscoll. "Ah, Driscoll," said Paul, unctuously, "if we were moralists instead of poor,

frail, time-serving creatures as we are, what a lesson might we not read in the fate of the poor fellow that lies there!"

"Ay, indeed!" sighed out Terry, assentingly.

"What an empty sound 'my Lord' is, when a man comes to that," said Paul, in the same solemn tone, giving, however, to the words "my Lord" a startling distinctness that immediately struck upon the sick man's ear. Conway quickly looked up and fixed his eyes on the speaker.

"Is it all true, then—am I not dreaming?" asked the wounded soldier, eagerly.

"Every word of it true, my Lord," said Classon, sitting down beside the bed.

"And I was the first, my Lord, to bring out the news," interposed Terry. "'Twas myself found the papers in an old farm-house, and showed them to Davenport Dunn."

"Hush, don't you see that you only confuse him?" whispered Classon, cautiously.

"Dunn, Dunn," muttered Conway, trying to recollect. "Yes, we met at poor Kellett's funeral—poor Kellett! the last of the Albuerras!"

"A gallant soldier, I have heard," chimed in Classon, merely to lead him on.

"Not a whit more so than his son Jack. Where is he—where is Jack?"

None could answer him, and there was a silence of some minutes.

"Jack Kellett would never have deserted me this way if he were alive and well," muttered Conway, painfully. "Can no one give me any tidings of him?"

Another silence ensued.

"And I intended he should have been my heir," said Conway, dreamily. "How strangely it sounds, to be sure, the notion of inheriting anything from Charley Conway. How little chance there was a month or two back that my best legacy might not have been a shabrack or a pair of pistols; and now I'm the Lord Viscount—what is it?—Viscount——"

A wild gust of wind—one of those swooping blasts for which the Euxine is famous—now struck the strong old walls, and made the massive casements rattle. The sick man started at the noise, which recalled at once the crash of the battle-field, and he cried out vigorously, "Move up, men—move up; keep together, and charge. Charge!" and with bent-down head and compressed lips he seemed like one prepared to meet a mur-

derous onslaught. A sudden faintness succeeded to this excitement, and he lay back, weak and exhausted. As he fell back, a letter dropped from his hand to the ground. Classon speedily caught it up, and opened it. He had, however, but time to read the opening line, which ran thus: "My dearest Charley, our cause is all but won——"

"From his mother," interposed Driscoll, leaning over his shoulder.

"Ay, my mother, murmured Conway, whose ear, preternaturally acute from fever, caught the word; "she will see that my wishes are carried out, and that all I leave behind me goes to poor Jack."

"We'll take care of that, Sir," said Classon, blandly; "only let us know what it is you desire. We have no other object here than to learn your wishes."

With all the alacrity of one accustomed to such emergencies, Paul drew a small portfolio from his pocket provided with all materials for writing, and arrayed them neatly before him; but already the sick man had dropped off into a sleep, and was breathing heavily.

"That box must contain all the papers," said Classon, rising stealthily and crossing the room; "and see, the key is in the lock!" In a moment they were both on the spot, busily ransacking the contents. One glance showed their suspicions to be correct: there were heaps of legal documents, copies of deeds, extracts of registries, with innumerable letters of explanation. They had no time for more than the most hurried look at these; in fact, they turned in terror at every movement, to see if the sick man had recovered from his swoon.

"This is all; better than ever I looked for," said Classon. "Fill your pockets with them; we must divide the spoil between us, and be off before he rallies."

Driscoll obeyed with readiness. His eager eye scrutinised hastily so much as he could catch of the import of each document; but he did not venture, by any attempt at selection, to excite Classon's suspicions.

"If we cannot make our own terms after this night's work, Driscoll, my name is not Paul Classon. The poor fellow here will soon be past tale-telling, even if he were able to see us. There you have dropped a large parchment."

"I'll put it in the pocket of my cloak," said the other, in a whisper; while he added, still more stealthily, "wouldn't you swear that he was looking at us this minute?"

Classon started. The sick man's eyes were open, and their gaze directed towards them, while his lips, slightly parted, seemed to indicate a powerless attempt to speak.

"No," said Classon, in a scarcely audible whisper; "that is death."

"I declare I think he sees us," muttered Driscoll.

"And if he does, man, what signifies it? He's going where the knowledge will little benefit him. Have you everything safe and sure, now? There, button your coat well up; we must start at once."

"May I never! if I can take my eyes off him," said Driscoll, trembling.

"You had better take yourself off, bodily, my worthy friend; there's no saying who might chance to come in upon us here. Is not that a signet ring on his finger? It would only be a proper attention to carry it to his mother, Driscoll." There was a half sarcasm about the tone of this speech that made it sound strangely ambiguous, as, stooping down, he proceeded to take off the ring.

"Leave it there—leave it there! it will bring bad luck upon us," murmured Driscoll, in terror.

"There is no such bad luck as not to profit by an opportunity," whispered Classon, as he tried, but in vain, to withdraw the ring. A sharp, half-suppressed cry suddenly escaped him, and Driscoll exclaimed,

"What is it? What's the matter?"

"Look, and see if he hasn't got hold of me, and tightly, too."

The affected jocularly of his tone accorded but ill with the expression of pain and fright so written upon his features, for the dying man had grasped him by the wrist, and held him with a grip of iron.

"That's what they call a dead man's grip, I suppose?" said Classon, in assumed mockery "Just try if you cannot unclasp his fingers."

"I wouldn't touch him if you offered me a thousand guineas for it," said Driscoll, shuddering.

"Nonsense, man. We cannot stand fooling here, and I shall only hurt him if I try it with one hand. Come, open his fingers gently. Be quick. I hear voices without, and the tramp of horses' feet in the court below. Where are you going? You're not about to leave me here?"

"May I never! if I know what to do," muttered Driscoll, in

a voice of despair. "And didn't I tell you from the first it would bring bad luck upon us?"

"The worst of all luck is to be associated with a fool and a coward," said Classon, savagely. "Open these fingers at once, or give me a knife and I'll do it myself."

"The Lord forgive you, but you're a terrible man!" cried Driscoll, moving stealthily towards the door.

"So you *are* going?" muttered Paul, with a voice of intense passion. "You would leave me here to take the consequences, whatever they might be?"

Driscoll made no reply, but stepped hastily out of the room, and closed the door.

For a moment, Classon stood still and motionless; then, bending down his head, he tried to listen to what was passing outside, for there was a sound of voices in the corridor, and Driscoll's one of them. "The scoundrel is betraying me!" muttered Paul to himself. "At all events, these must not be found upon me." And with this, and by the aid of his one disengaged hand, he proceeded to strew the floor of the room with the various papers he had abstracted from the box. Again, too, he listened; but now all was still without. What could it mean? Had Driscoll got clear away, without even alluding to him? And now he turned his gaze upon the sick man, who lay there calm and motionless as before. "This will end badly if I cannot make my escape," muttered he to himself; and he once more strove with all his might to unclasp the knotted fingers, but such was the rigid tenacity of their grasp, they felt as though they must sooner be broken than yield. "Open your hand, Sir. Let me free," whispered he in Conway's ear. "That fellow has robbed you, and I must follow him. There, my poor man, unclasp your fingers," said he, caressingly, "or it will be too late!"

Was it a delusion, that he thought a faint flickering of a smile passed over that death-like countenance? And now, in whispered entreaty, Classon begged and implored the other to set him free.

"There is nothing for it, then, but this," said Paul, with a muttered curse, "and your own fault is it that I am driven to it!" And, so saying, he drew a powerful clasp-knife from his pocket, and tried to open it with his teeth; but the resistance of the spring still defied all his efforts for some time, and it was only after a long struggle that he succeeded. "He's insensible; he'll never feel it," muttered Paul below his breath;

"and even if he should, self-preservation is the first of all cares." And with this he grasped the knife vigorously in his strong hand, and gazed at the sick man, who seemed to return his stare as fixedly. There was in Conway's look even a something of bold defiance, that seemed to say. "I dare and defy you!" so at least did Classon read it, and quailed before its haughty meaning. "What wretched cowardice is over me, and at a time when minutes are worth days," muttered Classon. "Here goes!" But now a confused noise of many voices, and the steps of advancing feet, were heard in the corridor, and Classon sank down beside the bed, a cold sweat covering his forehead and face, while he trembled in every limb.

The room was speedily filled with staff officers and surgeons, in the midst of whom was a civilian, travel-stained and tired-looking, who pressed eagerly forward, saying, as he beheld Classon, "Who is this man—what is he doing here?"

"An humble missionary—a weak vessel," said Paul, whinily. "In a paroxysm of his pain he caught me thus, and has held me ever since. There—at last I am free!" And as he said these words the sick man's fingers unclasped and liberated him.

"There has been foul play here," said Mr. Reggis, the stranger in civilian dress. "See! that box has been rifled; the floor is covered with papers. This man must be detained."

"In bonds or in a dungeon it matters not," said Paul, holding up his hands as if about to open a lengthy discourse, but he was hurried away ere he could continue.

"He is certainly no worse," said one of the surgeons, as he felt Conway's pulse and examined the action of his heart, "but I am far from saying that he will recover!"

"If I do not greatly mistake," said Reggis, "our friend the missionary is the man through whose kind offices I was betrayed within the Russian lines; but I'll look to this later. As it was, I have had little to complain of my treatment in Sebastopol, and my detention was of the shortest."

"And Miss Kellett—is she free also?" asked one of the bystanders.

"Yes; we came back together. She is up at head-quarters, giving Lord Raglan an account of her capture."

"What is it, Conway?" asked one of the surgeons, suddenly startled by the intensity of the anxiety in his face. "Are you in pain?"

He shook his head in dissent.

"You are thirsty, perhaps? Will you have something to drink?"

"No," said he, with the faintest possible utterance.

"What is it, then, my poor fellow?" said he, affectionately.

"So it was not a dream!" gasped out Conway.

"What was it you fancied to be a dream?"

"All—everything but this!" And he pointed to a deep wound from a sabre-cut in his shoulder.

"Ay, and that, too, will be as a dream some years hence!" said the other, cheerily.

It was evident now that the excitement of talking and seeing so many persons about him was injurious, and the surgeons silently motioned to the bystanders to retire.

"May I remain with him?" asked the lawyer. "If he could give his consent to certain measures, sign one or two papers, years of litigation might be saved."

Conway had, meanwhile, beckoned to the surgeon to approach him; and then, as the other leaned over the bed, he whispered,

"Was it true what I have just heard—was she really here?"

"Miss Kellett, do you mean? Yes; she carried up the news to you herself. It was she that tied the handkerchief on your wounded artery, too, and saved your life."

"Here—in the Crimea? It cannot—cannot be!" sighed Conway.

"She is not the only noble-hearted woman who has left home and friends to brave perils and face hardships, though I own she stands alone for heroism and daring."

"So, then, it was not a delusion—I did actually see her in the trenches?" said Conway, eagerly.

"She was in the advanced parallel the night the Russians surprised the 5th. She was the first to give the alarm of the attack."

"Only think, doctor, of what happened to me that night! I was sent up at speed to say that reinforcements were coming up. Two companies of the Royals were already in march. My horse had twice fallen with me, and, being one-armed, I was a good deal shaken, and so faint when I arrived that I could scarcely deliver my message. It was just then a woman—I could only perceive in the darkness that she seemed young—gave me her brandy-flask; after drinking, I turned to give it back to her, but she was gone. There was no time to search for her at such a moment, and I was about to ride away, when 'a carcasse,' exploding on one of the redoubts, lit up the whole scene for a



The Victory

considerable space around, and whom should I see but Jack Kellett's sister, cheering the men and encouraging them to hold their ground. I could have sworn to her features, as I could now to yours; but that she could really be there seemed so utterly impossible, that I fancied it was a delusion. Nay," added he, after a pause, "let me tell the whole truth. I thought it was a warning! Ay, doctor, the weight is off my heart now that I have confessed this weakness." As Conway spoke, he seemed, indeed, as though he had relieved himself of some mighty care, for already his eye had regained its lustre, and his bold features recovered their wonted expression. "Now," cried he, with a renovated vigour, "I have done with false terrors about second sight, and the rest of it. I am myself again."

"You can listen to my tidings, then," said Reggis, seating himself at the bedside, and at once beginning a narrative, to which I am obliged to own Conway did not always pay a becoming attention, his thoughts still reverting to very different scenes and incidents from those which the lawyer recounted. Indeed, more than once was the narrator's patience sorely tried and tested. "I am doing my very best to be brief, Sir. I am limiting myself strictly to a mere outline of the case," said he, in something of pique. "It *might* interest you—it *ought* to interest you!"

"If the doctor yonder will promise me health and years to enjoy all this same good fortune, so it will interest me," cried Conway. "What does the income amount to?"

"If we only recover the English estates, it will be something under twelve thousand a year. If we succeed with the Irish, it will be about three more."

"And how far are we on the road to this success?"

"One verdict is already won. The first action for ejectment on title, has been brought, and we are the victors. Upon this, all your counsel are agreed, your claim to the Viscounty rests."

"I can scarcely credit—scarcely picture it to myself," said Conway, half aloud. "My mind is confused by the thought of all the things I wish to do, if this be true. First of all, I want to purchase Jack Kellett's commission."

"If you mean Miss Kellett's brother, he is already gazetted an ensign, and on his way to join his regiment in India."

"And how do you know this?"

"She told me so herself."

"She! When and where have you seen her?"

"Here, at head-quarters; in Sebastopol, where we were

prisoners together; at the camp yesterday, where we parted."

"My poor head cannot bear this," said Conway, painfully; "I am struggling between the delight of all these good tidings and a terrible dread that I am to awake and find them but a dream. You said that she was here in the camp?"

"That she is. If you but heard the cheer that greeted her arrival! it began at the advanced pickets, and swelled louder and louder, till, like the roar of the sea, it seemed to make the very air tremble. There, hear that! As I live, it is the same shout again."

"Here comes the General and his staff into the court below," said the doctor, hurrying away to receive them.

As the sounds of a distant cheer died away, the noise of horses' feet resounded through the court-yard, and the clank of musketry in salute announced the arrival of an officer of rank.

"I declare they are coming this way," cried Mr. Reggis, rising in some confusion, "and I heard your name spoken. Coming, I've no doubt, to see *you*."

"The General of your division, Conway, come to ask after you," said an aide-de-camp, entering, and then standing aside to make place for a venerable, soldier-like man, whose snow-white hair would have graced a patriarch.

"I have come to shake your hand, Conway," said he, "and to tell you we are all proud of you. There is nothing else talked of through our own or the French camp than that daring feat of yours, and England will soon hear of it."

A deep blush of manly shame covered Conway's face as he listened to these words, but he could not speak.

"I have been talking the matter over with the General Commanding-in-chief," resumed he, "who agrees with me that the Horse Guards might possibly, recognising your former rank of captain, make you a now brevet major, and thus qualify you for the Bath."

"Time enough, General, for that," said Conway. "I have a very long arrear of folly and absurdity to wipe out ere I have any pretension to claim high rewards."

"Well, but if all that I hear be true, we are likely to lose your services here; they have a story abroad about a Peerage and a vast fortune to which you have succeeded. Indeed, I heard this moment from Miss Kellett——"

"Is she here, Sir?—can I see her?" cried Conway, eagerly.

"Yes. She has come over to say good-by, for, I regret to

say, she, too, is about to leave us to join her brother at Calcutta."

A sickly paleness spread itself over Conway's cheeks, and he muttered, "I must see her—I must speak with her at once."

"So you shall, my poor fellow," said the other, affectionately; "and I know of no such recompense for wounds and suffering as to see her gentle smile and hear her soft voice. She shall come to you immediately."

Conway covered his face with his hand to conceal the emotion that stirred him, and heard no more. Nor was he conscious that one by one the persons around him slipped noiselessly from the room, while into the seat beside his bed glided a young girl's figure, dressed in deep black, and veiled.

"Such a fate!" muttered he, half aloud; "all this, that they call my good fortune, comes exactly when I do not care for it."

"And why so?" asked a low, soft voice, almost in his very ear.

"Is this indeed you?" cried he, eagerly; "was it *your* hand I felt on my temples as I lay wounded outside the trenches? was it *your* voice that cheered me as they carried me to the rear?"

She slightly bent her head in assent, and murmured, "Your old comrade's sister could not do less."

"And now you are about to leave me," said he, with an overwhelming sorrow in the tone.

She turned away her head slightly, and made no answer.

"I, who am utterly alone here," said he, in a broken voice. "Is this, too, like my old comrade's sister?" There was a peevishness in the way he spoke this, of which he seemed himself to be ashamed the moment the words were uttered, and he quickly added, "What a fellow I am to say this to you!—*you*, who have done so much for me—*you*, who promised to be a daughter to my poor mother when I am gone!"

"But you are not to take this gloomy view," said she, hastily; "the surgeons all pronounce you better; they agree that your wounds progress favourably, and that in a week or two you may be removed to Constantinople, and thence to England."

He gave a faint, sickly smile of most melancholy meaning.

"And what will not the cheery, bracing air of those Welsh mountains do, aided by the kind care of that best of nurses, a fond mother?"

"And where will you be by that time?" asked he, eagerly.

"Journeying away eastward to some far-away land, still more friendless!" said she, sadly.

"This, then, is the sum of all my good fortune, that when life opens fairly for me, it shall be bereft of all that I care for!" cried he, wildly.

Terrified by the excited tone in which he spoke, as well as by the feverish lustre of his eyes, Sybella tried to calm and soothe him, but he listened—if, indeed, he heard her—with utter apathy.

"Come!" cried he, at last, "if your resolve be taken, so is mine. If you leave for India, I shall never quit the Crimea."

"It is not thus I expected one to speak who loves his mother as you do," said she, reproachfully.

"Ah, Sybella, it would indeed have been a happy day for me when I should have returned to her in honour, could I but have said, 'You have not alone a son beneath your roof, but a dear daughter also.' If all that they call my great luck had brought this fortune, then had I been indeed a fellow to be envied. Without that hope, there is not another that I want to cling to."

She tried gently to withdraw her hand from his, but he held it in his grasp, and continued:

"You, who never heard of me till the first day we met, know little of the stored-up happiness your very name has afforded me for many a day—how days long Jack talked of you to me as we rambled together—how the long nights of the trenches were beguiled by telling of you—till at length I scarcely knew whether I had not myself known and loved you for years. I used to fancy, too, how every trait of poor Jack—his noble ardour, his generous devotion—might be displayed amidst the softer and more graceful virtues of womanhood; and at last I came to know you, far and away above all I had ever dreamed of."

"Let me go—let me say good-by," said she, in a faint whisper.

"Bear with me a few moments longer, Sybella," cried he, passionately. "With all their misery, they are the happiest of my life."

"This is unfair—it is almost ungenerous of you," said she, with scarcely stifled emotion, and still endeavouring to withdraw her hand.

"So it is!" cried he, suddenly; "it is unmanly and ignoble both, and it is only a poor selfish sick man could stoop to plead so abjectly." He relinquished her hand as he spoke, and then grasping it suddenly, he pressed it to his lips, and burst into

tears. "A soldier should be made of better stuff, Sybella," said he, trying to smile. "Good-by—good-by."

"It is too late to say so now," said she faintly. "I will not go."

"Not go—not leave me, Sybella?" cried he. "Oh, that I may have heard you aright! Did you say you would remain with me, and for how long?"

"For ever!" said she, stooping down and kissing his forehead. The next moment she was gone.

"Come, Conway," said the doctor, "cheer up, my good fellow, you'll be all right in a week or so. You've got something worth living for, too, if all accounts be true."

"More than you think for, doctor," said Conway, heartily—"far more than you think for."

"The lawyer talks of a Peerage and a fine estate."

"Far more than that," cried Conway; "a million times better."

The surgeon turned a look of half apprehension on the sick man, and, gently closing the shutters, he withdrew.

Dark as was that room, and silent as it was, what blissful hopes and blessed anticipations crowded and clustered around that low "sick-bed"—what years of happiness unfolded themselves before that poor brain, which no longer felt a pang, save in the confusion of its bright imaginings! How were wounds forgotten and sufferings unminded in those hours wherein a whole future was revealed!

At last he fell off to sleep, and to dream of a fair white hand that parted the hair upon his forehead, and then gently touched his feverish cheek. Nor was it all a dream; she was at his bedside.

CHAPTER XCVI.

"GROG" IN COUNCIL.

"WHAT dreary little streets are those that lead from the Strand towards the Thames! Pinched, frail, semi-genteel, and many-lodgered are the houses, mysteriously indicative of a variously occupied population, and painfully suggesting, by the surging conflict of busy life at one end, and the dark flowing river at the other, an existence maintained between struggle and suicide." This, most valued reader, is no reflection of mine, but was the thought that occupied the mind of one who, in not the very best of humours, and of a wet and dreary night, knocked in succession at half the doors in the street in search after an acquaintance.

"Yes, Sir, the second back," said a sleepy maid-servant at last; "he is just come in."

"All right," said the stranger. "Take that carpet-bag and writing-desk up-stairs to his room, and say 'that Captain Davis is coming after them.'"

"You owe me a tip, Captain," said the cabman, catching the name as he was about to mount his box. "Do you remember the morning I drove you down to Blackwall to catch the Antwerp boat, I went over Mr. Moss, the Sheriff's officer, and smashed his ankle, and may I never taste bitters again if I got a farthing for it."

"I remember," said Davis, curtly. "Here's a crown. I'd have made it a sovereign if it had been his neck you'd gone over."

"Better luck next next time, Sir, and thank you," said the man, as he drove away.

The maid was yet knocking for admission when Grog arrived at the door. "Captain Fisk, Sir—Captain Fisk, there's a gent as says——"

"That will do," said Davis taking the key from her hand and opening the door for himself.

"Old Grog himself, as I'm a living man!" cried a tall, much-whiskered and moustached fellow, who was reading a *Bell's Life* at the fire.

"Ay, Master Fisk—no other," said Davis, as he shook his friend cordially by the hand. "I've had precious work to find you out. I was up at Duke-street, then they sent me to the Adelphi; after that I tried Ling's, in the Haymarket, and it was a waiter there——"

"Joe," broke in the other.

"Exactly. Joe told me that I might chance upon you here."

"Well, I'm glad to see you, old fellow, and have a chat about long ago," said Fisk, as he placed a square green bottle and some glasses on the table. "How well you're looking, too; not an hour older than when I saw you four years ago!"

"Ain't I, though," muttered Grog. "Ay, and like the racers, I've got weight for age besides. I'm a stone and a half heavier than I ought to be, and there's nothing worse than that to a fellow that wants to work with his head and sleep with one eye open."

"You can't complain much on that score, Kit; you never made so grand a stroke in your life as that last one—the marriage, I mean."

"It wasn't bad," said Davis, as he mixed his liquor, "nor was it exactly the kind of hazard that every man could make. Beecher was a troublesome one—a rare troublesome one; nobody could ever say when he'd run straight."

"I always thought him rotten," said the other, angrily.

"Well, he is and he isn't," said Grog, deliberately.

"He has got no pluck," said Fisk, indignantly.

"He has quite enough."

"Enough—enough for what?"

"Enough for a Lord. Look here, Master Fisk, so long as you have not to gain your living by anything, it is quite sufficient if you can do it moderately well. Many a first-rate amateur there is who wouldn't be thought a tenth-rate artist."

"I'd like to know where you had been to-day if it wasn't for your pluck," said Fisk, doggedly.

"In a merchant's office in the City, belike, on a hundred and twenty pounds a year; a land steward down in Dorsetshire, at half the salary; skipper of a collier from North Shields, or an

overseer in Jamaica. These are the high prizes for such as you and me; and the droll part of the matter is, they *will* talk of us as 'such lucky dogs,' whenever we attain to one of these brilliant successes. Gazette my son-in-law as Ambassador to Moscow, and nobody thinks it strange; announce in the same paper that Kit Davis has been made a gauger, and five hundred open mouths exclaim, 'How did he obtain that? Who the deuce got it for him? Does *he* fall on his legs!' and so on."

"I suppose we shall have our turn one of these days," muttered the other, sulkily.

"I hope not. I'd rather have things as they are," said Grog, gravely.

"Things as they are! And why so, I'd wish to ask?"

"Look at it this way, Tom Fisk," said Grog, squaring his arms on the table and talking with slow deliberation; "if you were going to cut into a round game, wouldn't you rather take a hand where the players were all soft ones, with plenty of cash, or would you prefer sitting down with a set of downy coves, all up to every dodge, and not a copper farthing in the company? Well, that's exactly what the world would be if the Manchester fellows had their way; that's exactly what it is, this very hour we're sitting here, in America. There's nobody on the square there. President, Judges, Editors, Congress men, Governors, are all rogues; and they've come to that pass, that any fellow with a dash of spirit about him must come over to Europe to gain his livelihood. I have it from their own lips what I'm telling you, for I was a thinking about going over there myself, but they said, 'Don't go, Sir'—they always say 'Sir'—'don't go, Sir.' Our Western fellows are very wide awake; for every trump *you'd* have up your *sleeve*, *they'd* have two in their *boots*!"

"For my own part," said Fisk, "I'd not go live amongst them if you'd make me Minister at Washington, and so I told Simmy Hanks this morning, when he came in such high feather about his appointment as Consul—I forget where to."

"Hanks—Hanks! The same fellow that used to be with Robins?"

"Just so; and for some years back Davenport Dunn's managing man."

Grog gave a very slight start, and they asked carelessly why he was leaving Dunn's employment.

"Dunn's going to shut up shop. Dunn is to be a Peer next

week, and retires from business. He is to be in Tuesday's *Gazette*, so Hanks tells me."

"He has done the thing well, I suppose?" said Davis, coolly.

"Hanks says something like two millions sterling. Pretty well for a fellow that started without a sixpence."

"I wonder he couldn't have done something better for Hanks than that paltry place."

"So he might, and so he would; but you see, Simmy didn't like waiting. He's a close fellow, and one can't get much out of him, but I can perceive that he was anxious to get off the coach."

"Didn't like the pace—didn't trust the tackle overmuch," said Grog, carelessly.

"Something of that kind, I've no doubt," rejoined Fisk.

"Have you any pull over this same Hanks, Tom?" said Grog, confidentially.

"Well, I can't say I have. We were pals together long ago; we did a little in the racing line—in a very small way, of course. Then he used to have a roulette-table at Doncaster, but somehow there was no 'go' in him; he was over-cautious, and always saying, 'I'd rather take to "business,"' and as I hated business, we separated."

"It's odd enough that I can't remember the fellow. I thought I knew every one that was on the 'lay' these five-and-thirty years."

"He wasn't Hanks at the time I speak of; he was a Jew at that period, and went by the name of Simeon."

"Simeon, Simeon—not the fellow that used to come down to Windsor with the Hexquite Habannar cigars?" And Grog mimicked not alone the voice, but the face of the individual alluded to, till Fisk burst into a roar of laughter."

"That's Simmy—that's the man," cried Fisk, as he dried his eyes.

"Don't I know him! I had a class at that time, young fellows in the Blues. I used to give them lessons in billiards, and Simmy, as you call him, discounted for the mess on a sliding scale—ten per cent. for the Major, and sixty for Cornets the first year they joined. He was good fun, Simmy; he fancied he would have been a first-rate actor, and used to give scenes out of 'Othello,' in Kean's manner: that was the only soft thing about him, and many a fellow got a bill done by applauding. 'Now is the winter of our discontent!'" And Grog gave a low growling sort of a laugh at his reminiscences.

"You'll see him to-morrow; he's to breakfast here," said Fisk, rather amused at the prospect of a recognition between such men.

"He would never play *Shylock*," continued Grog, following out his reminiscences, "though we all told him he'd make a great hit in the part. The Jew, you see—the Jew couldn't stand *that*. And so Mr. Simmy Hanks is no other than Simeon! It was an old theory of mine, whenever I saw a fellow doing wonderfully well in the world, without any help from friends or family, to fancy that one time or other he must have belonged to what they are so fond of calling 'the Hebrew persuasion!'"

"I wouldn't rake up old memories with him, Grog, if I were you," said Fisk, coaxingly.

"It ain't *my* way, Tom Fisk," said Davis, curtly.

"He'll be at his ease at once when he perceives that you don't intend to rip up old scores; and he'll be just as delicate with *you*."

"Delicate with me?" cried Grog, bursting out into a fit of immoderate laughter. "Well, if that ain't a good one! I wonder what he is! Do you imagine Fitzroy Kelly is ashamed of being thought a lawyer, or Brodie of being a surgeon? You must be precious soft, my worthy friend, if you suppose that I don't know what the world thinks and says of *me*. No, no, there's no need of what you call delicacy at all. You used to be made of other stuff than this, Tom Fisk. It's keeping company with them snobs of half-pay officers, clerks in the Treasury, and Press reporters, has spoiled you; the demi-gents of the 'Garottaman Club' have ruined hundreds.

"The Garottaman is one of the first clubs in town," broke in Fisk.

"You're too much like sailors on a raft for my fancy;" said Grog, dryly.

"What do you mean by that?"

"Just that you are all hungry and have got nothing to eat—you're eternally casting lots who is to be devoured next! But we'll not fall out about that. I've been turning over in my head about this Simmy Hanks, and I'd like to have an hour in his company, all alone. Could you manage to be out of the way to-morrow morning and leave me to entertain him at breakfast?"

"It will suit my book to a trivet, for I want to go over to Barnes to look after a yearling I've got there, and you can tell Hanks that the colt was taken suddenly ill!"

"He'll not be very curious about the cause of your absence," said Grog, dryly. "The pleasure of seeing me so unexpectedly will put everything else out of his head." A grim smile showed the spirit in which he spoke these words.

It was now very late, and Davis threw himself on a sofa, with his great coat over him, and, wishing his friend a good night, was soon sound asleep: nor did he awake till aroused by the maid-servant getting the room into readiness and arranging the table for breakfast. Then, indeed, Grog arose and made his toilet for the day—not a very elaborate nor a very elegant one, but still a disguise such as the most practised Detective could not have penetrated, and yet removable in a moment, so that he might, by merely taking off eyebrows and moustaches, become himself at once.

Having given orders that the gentleman he expected should be shown in on his arrival, Grog solaced himself at the fire with a morning paper, in all the ease of slippers and an arm-chair. Almost the first thing that struck his eye was a paragraph informing the world that the marriage of a distinguished individual—whose approaching elevation to the Peerage had been already announced—with one of the most beautiful daughters of the aristocracy, would take place early in the ensuing week. And then, like a codicil to a will, followed a brilliant description of the gold dressing-case ordered by Mr. Davenport Dunn, at Storrs's, for his bride. He was yet occupied with the paragraph when Mr. Hanks entered the room.

"I am afraid I have made a mistake," said that bland gentleman. "I thought this was Captain Fisk's apartment."

"You're all right," said Grog, leisurely surveying the visitor, whose "get up" was really splendid. Amethyst studs glittered on his shirt; his ample chest seemed a shrine in its display of amulets and charmed offerings, while a massive chain crossed and recrossed him so frequently, that he appeared to be held together by its coils. Fur and velvet, too, abounded in his costume; and even to the immense "gland" that depended from his cane, there was an amount of costliness that bespoke affluence.

"I regret, Sir," began Hanks, pompously, "that I have not the honour——"

Yes, yes; you *have* the honour," broke in Grog. "You've had it this many a year. Sit down here. I don't wear exactly so well as you, but you'll remember me presently. I'm Kit Davis, man. You don't require me to say who you are."

"Davis—Grog Davis," muttered Hankses to himself, while an ashy paleness spread over his face.

"You don't look overjoyed to meet with an old friend," said Grog, with a peculiar grin; "but you ought, man. There's no friendships like early ones. The fellows who knew us in our first scrapes are always more lenient to our last wickednesses."

"Captain Davis—Captain Davis!" stammered out Hankses, "this is indeed an unexpected pleasure!"

"So much so that you can hardly get accustomed to it," said Grog, with another grin. "Fisk received a hasty message that called him away to the country this morning, and left me to fill his place; and I, as you may guess, was little loath to have a cozy chat with an old friend that I have not seen—how many years is it?"

"It must be nigh ten, or even twelve!"

"Say, seven or eight-and-twenty, man, and you'll be nigher the mark. Let me see," said he, trying to remember, "the last time I saw you was at Exeter. You were waiting for your trial about those bills of George Colborne. Don't look so frightened, there's no one to hear us here. It was as narrow an escape there as ever man had. It was after that, I suppose, you took the name of Hankses?"

"Yes," said the other, in a faint whisper.

"Well, I must say Christianity doesn't seem to have disagreed with you. You're in capital case—a little pluffy for work, but in rare health, and sleek as a beaver."

"Always the same. He will have his joke," muttered Hankses, as though addressing some third party to the colloquy.

"I can't say that I have committed any excesses in that line of late," said Grog, dryly. "I've had rather a tough fight with the world!"

"But you've fought it well, and successfully, Davis," said the other with confidence. "Haven't you married your daughter to a Viscount?"

"Who told *you* that? Who knows it here?" cried Grog, hurriedly.

"I heard it from Fordyce's people a fortnight ago. It was I myself brought the first news of it to Davenport Dunn."

"And what did *he* say?"

"Well, he didn't say much; he wondered a little how it came

about; hinted that you must be an uncommon clever fellow, for it was a great stroke, if all should come right."

"You mean about the disputed claim to the title?"

"Yes."

"He has his doubts about that then, has he?"

"He hasn't much doubt on the subject, for it lies with himself to decide the matter either way. If he likes to produce certain papers, Conway's claim is as good as established. You are aware that they have already gained two of their actions on ejectment; but Dunn could save them a world of time and labour, and that's why he's coming up to-morrow. Fordyce is to meet him at Calvert's Hotel, and they're to go into the entire question."

"What are his terms? How much does he ask?" said Grog, bluntly.

"I can't possibly say; I can only suspect."

"What do you suspect, then?"

"Well," said Hanks, drawing a long breath, "my impression is that, if he decide for the present Viscount, he'll insist upon an assignment of the whole Irish property in his favour."

"Two thousand a year, landed property!" exclaimed Grog.

"Two thousand eight hundred, and well paid," said Hanks, coolly; "but that is not all."

"Not all! what do you mean?"

"Why, there's another hitch. But what am I saying?" cried he, in terror. "I don't believe that I'd speak of these things on my death-bed."

"Be frank and open with me, Simeon. I am a true pal to the man that trusts me, and the very devil to him that plays me false."

"I know it," said the other, gloomily.

"Well, now for that other hitch, as you called it. What is it?"

"It's about an estate that was sold under the 'Encumbered Court,' and bought by the late Lord Lackington—at least in his name—and then resold at a profit——" Here he stopped, and seemed as though he had already gone too far.

"I understand," broke in Grog; "the purchase-money was never placed to the Viscount's credit, and your friend Dunn wants an acquittance in full of the claim."

"You've hit it!"

"What's the figure—how much?"

"Thirty-seven thousand six hundred pounds."

"He's no retail dealer, this same Davenport Dunn," said Grog, with a grin; "that much I *will* say of him."

"He has a wonderful head," said Hanks, admiringly.

"I'll agree with you, if it save his neck!" said Davis; and then added, after a moment, "He's bringing up all these documents and papers with him, you said?"

"Yes; he intends to make some settlement or other of the matter before he marries. After that, he bids farewell to business for ever."

"He'll go abroad, I suppose?" said Davis, not attaching any strong signification to his remark; but suddenly perceiving an expression of anxiety in Hanks's face, he said, "Mayhap it were all as well; he'd be out of the way for a year or so!"

The other nodded an assent.

"He has 'realised' largely, I take it?"

Another nod.

"Foreign funds and railways—eh?"

"Not railways—no, scrip!" said Hanks, curtly.

"Won't there be a jolly smash!" said Davis, with a bitter laugh. "I take it there's not been any one has 'done the trick' these fifty years like this fellow."

"I suspect you're right there," murmured Hanks.

"I have never seen him but once, and then only for a few minutes, but I read him like a printed book. He had put on the grand integrity and British-mercantile-honesty frown to scowl me down, to remind Davis, 'the Leg,' that he was in the presence of Dunn, the Unimpeachable, but I put one eye a little aslant, this way, and I just said, 'Round the corner, old fellow—round the corner!' Oh, didn't he look what the Yankees call 'mean ugly!'"

"He'll never forget it to you, that's certain."

"If he did, I'd try and brush up his memory a bit," said Davis, curtly. "He must be a rare sharp one," added he, after a pause.

"The cleverest man in England, I don't care who the other is," cried Hanks, with enthusiasm. "When the crash comes—it will be in less than a month from this day—the world will discover that they're done to the tune of between three and four millions sterling, and I defy the best accountant that ever stepped to trace out where the frauds originated, whether it was the Railways smashed the Mines, the Mines that ruined the Great Ossory, the Great Ossory that dipped the Drainage, or the Drainage that swamped the Glengarriff, not to speak of

all the incidental confusion about estates never paid for, and sums advanced on mock mortgage, together with cancelled scrip reissued, preference shares circulated before the current ones, and dock warrants for goods that never existed. And that ain't all," continued Hanks, to whom the attentive eagerness of Grog's manner vouched for the interest his narrative excited—"that ain't all; but there isn't a class nor condition in life, from the peer to the poorest labouring man, that he hasn't in some way involved in his rogueries, and made him almost a partner in the success. Each speculation being dependent for its solvency on the ruin of some other, Ossory will hate Glengariff, Drainage detest Mines, Railways curse Patent Fuel, and so on. I'll give the Equity Court and the Bankrupt Commissioners fifty years and they'll not wind up the concern."

Grog rubbed his hands gleefully, and laughed aloud.

"Then all the people that will be compromised!" said Hanks; "Glumthal himself is not too clean-handed; lords and fine ladies that lent their names to this or that company, chairmen of committees in the House that didn't disdain to accept five hundred or a thousand shares as a mark of grateful recognition for pushing a bill through its second reading; ay, and great mercantile houses that discounted freely on forged acceptances, owning that they thought the best of all security was the sight of a convict-hulk and a felon's jacket, and that no man was such prompt pay as he that took a loan of a friend's signature. What a knock-down blow for all that lath-and-plaster edifice we dignify by the name of Credit, when the world sees that it is a loaf the rogue can take a slice out of as well as the honest man!"

"Don't we have stunning leaders in the *Times* about it!" cried Grog. "It will go deuced hard with the Ministry that have made this fellow a Peer."

"Yes, they'll have to go out," said Hanks, gravely; "a Cabinet may defend a bad measure—they'll never fight for a bad man."

"And they can't hang this fellow?" said Grog, after a pause.

"Hang! I should think not, indeed."

"Nor even transport him?"

"No, not touch a hair of his head. He'll have to live abroad for a year or two—in Paris or Rome—no great hardship if it were Naples; he'll make a surrender of his property—an old house somewhere and some brick-fields, a mine of Daryamon

coal, and a flax-mill on a river that has scarcely any water, together with a sheaf of bad bills and Guatemala bonds. They'll want to examine him before the Court, and he'll send them a sick certificate, showing how agitation and his recent losses have almost made him imbecile; and even Mr. Linklater will talk feelingly about his great reverse of condition."

"It's as good as a play to hear about this," said Grog; "It beats Newmarket all to sticks."

"If it's a play, it won't be a benefit to a good many folk," said Hanks, grinning.

"Well, he is a clever fellow—far and away cleverer than I ever thought him," said Grog. "Any man—I don't care who he is—can do the world to a short extent, but to go in at them on this scale a fellow must be a genius."

"He is a genius," said Hanks, in a tone of decision. "Just think for a moment what a head it must have been that kept all that machinery at work for years back without a flaw or a crack to be detected, started companies, opened banks, worked mines, railroads, and telegraphs, built refuge harbours, drained whole counties, brought vast tracts of waste land into cultivation, equalising the chances of all enterprises by making the success of this come to the aid of the failure of that: the grand secret of the whole being the dexterous application of what is called 'Credit.'"

"All that wouldn't do at Doncaster," said Grog; "puff your horse as much as you like, back him up how you will in the betting-ring, if he hasn't the speed in him it won't do. It's only on 'Change you can 'brag out of a bad hand.' Dunn would never cut any figure on the Turf."

"There you are all wrong; there never yet was the place, or the station, where that man wouldn't have distinguished himself. Why, it was that marvellous power of his kept me with him for years back. I knew all that was going on. I knew that we hadn't—so to say—coals for one boiler while we had forty engines in full stroke; but I couldn't get away. It was a sort of fascination; and when he'd strike out a new scheme, and say carelessly, 'Call the capital one million, Hanks,' he spoke like a man that had only to put his hand in a bag and produce the money. Nothing daunted, nothing deterred him. He'd smash a rival company as coolly as you'd crush a shell under your heel, and he'd turn out a Government with the same indifference he'd discharge a footman."

"Well," grumbled out Grog, at last, for he was getting irri-

table at the exaggerated estimate Hanks formed of his chief, "what has it all come to? Ain't he smashed at last?"

"*He* smashed!" cried Hanks, in derision. "*He* smashed! *You* are smashed! I am smashed! any one else you like is smashed, but *he* is not! Mind my words, Davis, Davenport Dunn will be back here, in London, before two years are over, with the grandest house and the finest retinue in town. His dinners will be the best, and his balls the most splendid of the season. No club will rival his cook, no equipage beat his in the Park. When he rises in the Lords—which he'll do only seldom—there will be a most courteous attention to his words; and, above all, you'll never read one disparaging word about him in the papers. I give him two years, but it's just as likely he'll do it in less."

"It may be all as you say," said Grog, sullenly, "though I won't say I believe it myself; but, at all events, it doesn't help *me* on my way to my own business with him. I want these papers of Lackington's out of his hands! He may 'walk into' the whole world, for all that *I* care: but I want to secure *my* daughter as the Viscountess—that's how it stands."

"How much ready money can you command? What sum can you lay your hand on?"

Grog drew his much-worn pocket-book from his breast, and opening the leaves began to count to himself.

"Something like fifty-seven pounds odd shillings," said he, with a grin.

"If you could have said twelve or fourteen thousand, down, it might be nearer the mark. Conway's people are ready with about ten thousand."

"How do you know?" asked Grog, savagely.

"Dunn told me as much. But he doesn't like to treat with them, because the difficulty about the Irish estate would still remain unsettled."

"Then what am I to do? How shall I act?" asked Grog.

"It's not an easy matter to advise upon," said Hanks, thoughtfully, "for Dunn holds to one maxim with invariable tenacity, which is never to open any negotiation with a stranger which cannot be completed in one interview. If you couldn't begin by showing the bank-notes, he'd not discuss the question at all."

Grog arose and walked the room with hasty steps: he tried to seem calm, but in the impatient gesture with which he threw his cigar into the fire might be read the agitation he could not conquer nor conceal.

"What could you yourself do with him, Hanks?" said he, at last.

"Nothing—absolutely nothing," said the other. "He never in his life permitted a subordinate to treat, except on his own behalf; that was a fixed law with him."

"Curse the fellow!" burst out Davis, "he made rules and laws as if the world was all his own."

"Well, he managed to have it pretty much his own way, it must be confessed," said Hanks, with a half smile.

"He is to be in town to-morrow, you said," muttered Grog, half aloud. "Where does he stop?"

"This time it will be at Calvert's, Upper Brook-street. His house in Piccadilly is ready, but he'll not go there at present."

"He makes a mystery of everything, so far as I can see," said Grog, angrily. "He comes up by the express train, doesn't he?" grumbled he, after a pause.

"If he hasn't a special engine," said Hanks. "He always, however, has his own *coupé* furnished and fitted up for himself, and never, by any chance, given to any one else. There's a capital bed in it and a desk, where he writes generally the whole night through, and a small cooking apparatus, where he makes his coffee, so that no servant ever interrupts him at his work. Indeed, except from some interruption, or accident on the line, the guard would not dare to open his door. Of course *his* orders are very strictly obeyed. I remember one night Lord Jedburg sent in his name, and Dunn returned for answer, 'I can't see him.'"

"And did the Prime Minister put up with that?" asked Davis.

"What could he do?" said the other, with a shrug of the shoulder.

"If I were Lord Jedburg I'd have unkennelled him, I promise you *that*, Simmy. But here, it's nigh twelve o'clock, and I have a mass of things to do. I say, Hanks, could you contrive to look in here to-morrow evening, after nightfall? I may have something to tell you."

"We were strictly confidential—all on honour, this morning, Kit," said the other, whispering.

"I think you know *me*, Master Simmy," was all Grog's reply. "I don't think my worst enemy could say that I ever 'split' on the fellow that trusted me."

A hearty shake-hands followed, and they parted.

CHAPTER XCVII

THE TRAIN.

THE up-train from Holyhead was a few minutes behind time at Chester, and the travellers who awaited its arrival manifested that mixture of impatience and anxiety which in our railroad age is inseparable from all delay. One stranger, however, displayed a more than ordinary eagerness for its coming, and compared the time of his watch repeatedly with the clock of the station.

At length from the far-away distance the wild scream of the engine was heard, and with many a cranking clash and many a heavy sob the vast machine swept smoothly in beneath the vaulted roof. As the stranger moved forward to take his place, he stopped to hear a few words that met his ear. It was a railroad official said: "Mr. Davenport Dunn delayed us about a quarter of an hour; he wanted to give a look at the new pier, but we have nearly made it up already." "All right!" replied the station-master. The stranger now moved on till he came in front of a *coupé* carriage, whose window-blinds, rigidly drawn down, excluded all view from without. For an instant he seemed to fumble at the door, in an endeavour to open it, but was speedily interrupted by a guard calling out, "Not there, Sir—that's a private carriage;" and thus warned, the traveller entered another lower down the line. There were two other travellers in the same compartment, apparently strangers to each other. As the stranger with whom we are immediately concerned took his place, he slipped into his pocket a small latch-key, of which, in the very brief attempt to try the door of the private carriage, he had successfully proved the utility, and, drawing his rug across his knees, lay calmly back.

"Here we are, detained again," grumbled out one of the travellers. "I say, guard, what is it now?"

"Waiting for a telegram for Mr. Davenport Dunn, Sir. There it comes! all right." A low bell rings out, a wild screech following, and with many a clank and shock the dusky monster sets out once more.

"Public convenience should scarcely be sacrificed in this manner," grumbled out the former speaker. "What is this Mr. Dunn to you or to me that we should be delayed for his good pleasure?"

"I am afraid, Sir," replied the other, whose dress and manner bespoke a clergyman, "that we live in an age when wealth is all-powerful, and its possessors dictate the law to all poorer than themselves."

"And can you tell me of any age when it was otherwise?" broke in the last arrival, with a half-rude chuckle. "It's all very fine to lay the whole blame of this, that, and t'other to the peculiar degeneracy of our own time, but my notion is, the world grows neither worse nor better." There was that amount of defiance in the tone of the speaker that seemed to warn his companions, for they each of them maintained a strict silence. Not so with him; he talked away glibly about the influence of money, pretty plainly intimating, that as nobody ever met the man who was indifferent to its possession, the abuse showered upon riches was nothing but cant and humbug. "Look at the parsons," said he; "they tell you it is all dross and rubbish, and yet they make it the test of your sincerity whenever they preach a charity sermon. Look at the lawyers, and they own that it is the only measure they know by which to recompense an injury; then take the doctors, and you'll see that their humanity has its price, and the good Samaritan charges a guinea a visit."

The individuals to whom these words were addressed made no reply; indeed, there was a tone of confident assumption in the speaker that was far from inviting converse, and now a silence ensued on all sides.

"Do either of you gentlemen object to tobacco?" said the last speaker, after a pause of some duration; and at the same time, without waiting for the reply, he produced a cigar-case from his pocket, and began deliberately to strike a light.

"I am sorry to say, Sir," responded the clergyman, "that smoking disagrees with me, and I cannot accustom myself to endure the smell of tobacco."

"All habit," rejoined the other, as he lighted his cigar. "I was that way myself for years, and might have remained so, too, but that I saw the distress and inconvenience I occasioned to many jolly fellows who loved their pipe; and so I overcame my foolish prejudices, and even took to the weed myself."

The other travellers muttered some low words of dissatisfaction, and the clergyman, opening the window, looked out, apparently in search of the guard.

"It's only a cheroot, and a prime one," said the smoker, coolly; "and as you object, I'll not light another."

"A vast condescension on your part, Sir, seeing that we have already signified our dislike to tobacco," said the lay traveller.

"I did not remark that *you* gave any opinion at all," said the smoker; "and my vast condescension, as you term it, is entirely in favour of this gentleman."

There was no mistaking the provocation of this speech, rendered actually insulting by the mode in which it was delivered; and the traveller to whom it was addressed, enveloping himself in his cloak, sat moodily back, without a word. The train soon halted for a few seconds, and, brief as was the interval, this traveller employed it to spring from his place, and seek a refuge elsewhere; a dexterous manœuvre which seemed to excite the envy of the parson, now left alone with his uncongenial companion. The man of peace, however, made the best of it, and, drawing his travelling-cap over his eyes, resolved himself to sleep. For a considerable while the other sat still, calmly watching him, and at last, when perfectly assured that the slumber was not counterfeited, he gently arose, and drew the curtain across the lamp in the roof of the carriage. A dim, half-lurid light succeeded, and by this uncertain glare the stranger proceeded to make various changes in his appearance. A large bushy wig of black hair was first discarded, with heavy eyebrows and whiskers to match; an immense overcoat was taken off, so heavily padded and stuffed that when denuded of it the wearer seemed half his size; large heels were unscrewed from his boots, reducing his height by full a couple of inches; till at length, in place of a large, unwieldy-looking man of sixty, lumbering and beetle-browed, there came forth a short, thick-set figure, with red hair and beard, twinkling eyes of a fierce grey, and a mouth the very type of unflinching resolution. Producing a small looking-glass, he combed and arranged his whiskers carefully, re-tied his cravat, and bestowed

a most minute scrutiny on his appearance, muttering, as he finished, to himself, "Ay, Kit, you're more like yourself now!" It is, perhaps, unnecessary to say this speech was addressed to our acquaintance Grog Davis, nor was it altogether what is called a "French compliment;" he *did* look terribly like himself. There was in his hard, stern face, his pinched-up eyes, and his puckered mouth, an amount of resolute vigour that showed he was on the eve of some hazardous enterprise. His toilet completed, he felt in his breast-pocket, to assure himself that something there was not missing, and then, taking out his watch, he consulted the time. He had scarcely time to replace it in his pocket when the train entered a deep cutting between two high banks of clay. It was apparently the spot he had waited for, and in an instant he had unfastened the door by his latch-key, and stood on the ledge outside. One more look within to assure himself that the other was still asleep, and he closed the door, and locked it.

The night was dark as pitch, and a thin soft rain was falling, as Davis, with a rapidity that showed this was no first essay in such a walk, glided along from carriage to carriage till he reached a heavy luggage van, immediately beyond which was the *coupé* of Mr. Davenport Dunn.

The brief prayer that good men utter ere they rush upon an enterprise of deadly peril must have its representative in some shape or other with those whose hearts are callous. Nature will have her due; and in that short interval—the bridge between two worlds—the worst must surely experience intense emotion. Whatever those of Davis, they were of the briefest. In another second he was at the door of Dunn's carriage, his eyes glaring beneath the drawn-down blind, where by a narrow slip of light, he could detect a figure busily employed in writing. So bent was he on mastering every portion and detail of the arrangement within, that he actually crept around till he reached the front windows, and could plainly see the whole *coupé* lighted up brilliantly with wax candles.

Surrounded with papers, and letters, and despatch-boxes, the man of business laboured away as though in his office, every appliance for refreshment beside him. These Davis noted well, remarking the pistols that hung between the windows, and a bell-pull quite close to the writing-table. This latter passed through the roof of the carriage, and was evidently intended to signalise the guard when wanted. Before another minute had elapsed Davis had cut off this

communication, and, knotting the string outside, still suffered it to hang down within as before.

All that *precaution* could demand was now done; the remainder must be decided by *action*. Noiselessly introducing the latch-key, Davis turned the lock, and opening the door, stepped inside. Dunn started as the door banged and there beheld him. To ring and summon the guard was the quick impulse of his ready wit; but when the bell-rope came down as he pulled it, the whole truth flashed across him that all had been concerted and plotted carefully.

"Never mind your pistols. I'm armed too," said Davis, coolly. "If it was your life I wanted, I could have taken it easily enough at any minute during the last ten or twelve."

"What do you mean then, Sir, by this violence? By what right do you dare to enter here?" cried Dunn, passionately.

"There has been no great violence up to this," said Davis, with a grin. "As to my right to be here, we'll talk about that presently. You know *me*, I believe?"

"I want to know why you are here," cried Dunn, again.

"And so you shall; but first of all no treachery. Deal fairly, and a very few minutes will settle all business between us."

"There is no business to be settled between us," said Dunn, haughtily, "except the insolence of your intrusion here, and for that you shall pay dearly."

"Don't try bluster with *me*, man," said Grog, contemptuously. "If you just stood as high in integrity as I know you to stand low in knavery, it wouldn't serve you. I've braved pluckier fellows than ever you were."

"With a sudden jerk Dunn let down the window, but Grog's iron grip held him down in his place, as he said, sternly, "I'll not stand nonsense. I have come here for a purpose, and I'll not leave it till it's accomplished. You know *me*."

"I do know you," said Dunn, with an insolent irony.

"And I know *you*. Hankses—Simmy Hankses—has told me a thing or two; but the world will soon be as wise as either of us."

Dunn's face became deadly pale, and in a voice broken and faint he said, "What do you mean? What has Hankses said?"

"All—everything. Why, bless your heart, man, it was no secret to me that you were cheating, the only mystery was *how* you did the trick; now Hankses has shown me that. I know

it all now. You hadn't so many trumps in your hand, but you played them twice over—that was the way you won the game. But that's no affair of mine. 'Rook' them all round—only don't 'try it on' with Kit Davis! What brought me here is this: *my* daughter is married to Annesley Beecher that was, the now Viscount Lackington; there's another fellow about to contest the title and the estates. *You* know all about his claim and his chances, and you can, they tell me, make it all 'snug' to either party. Now, I'm here to treat with you. How much shall it be? There's no use in going about the bush—how much shall it be?"

"I can be of no use to you in this business," said Dunn, hesitatingly; "the papers are not in my keeping. Conway's suit is in the hands of the first men at the Bar——"

"I know all that, and I know, besides, you have an appointment with Fordyce at Calvert's Hotel, to arrange the whole matter; so go in at once, and be on the square with me. Who has these papers? Where are they?"

Dunn started at the sudden tone of the question, and then his eyes turned as quickly towards a brass-bound despatch-box at the bottom of the carriage. If the glance was of the speediest, it yet had not escaped the intense watchfulness of Davis, who now reiterated his question of "Where are they?"

"If you'd come to me after my interview with Fordyce," said Dunn, with a slow deliberation, as though giving the matter a full reflection, "I think we might hit upon something together."

"To be sure we might," said Grog, laughing; "there's only one obstacle to that pleasant arrangement, that I should find an inspector and two constables of the police ready waiting for my visit. No, Master Dunn, what we're to do we'll do *here*, and *now*."

"You appear to measure all men by your own standard, Sir," said Dunn, indignantly; "and let me tell you that in point of honour it is a scant one."

"We're neither of us fit for a grenadier company of integrity, that's a fact, Dunn; but upon my solemn oath I believe I'm the best man of the two. But what's the use of this 'chaff?' I have heard from Hankses how it stands about that Irish estate you pretended to buy for the late Lord, and never paid for. Now you want to stand all square upon that, naturally enough; it is a pot of money—seven-and-thirty-thousand pounds. Don't you see, old fellow, I have the whole story all correct and clear,

so, once more, do be business-like, and say what's your figure—how much?"

Again did Dunn's eyes revert to the box at his feet, but it was difficult to say whether intentionally or not. Davis, however, never ceased to watch their gaze; and when Dunn, becoming suddenly conscious of the scrutiny, grew slightly red, Grog chuckled to himself, and muttered, "Your no match for Kit Davis, deep as you are."

"Until we learn to repose some trust in each other, Sir," said Dunn, whose confusion still continued, "all dealing together is useless."

"Well, if you mean by that," retorted Davis, "that you and I are going to start for a ten years' friendship, I declare off, and say it's no match. I told you what brought me here, and now I want *you* to say how I'm to go back again. Where are these same papers?—answer me that."

"Some are in the hands of Conway's lawyers—some are in the Crimea, carried away surreptitiously by a person who was once in my confidence—some are, I suspect, in the keeping of Conway's mother, in Wales——"

"And some are locked up in that red box there," said Grog, with a defiant look.

"Not one. I can swear by all that is most solemn and awful there's not a document there that concerns the cause." As Dunn spoke these words his voice trembled with intense agitation, and he grew sickly pale.

"What if I wouldn't believe you on your oath?" broke in Grog, whose keen eyes seemed actually to pierce the other's secret thoughts. "It wasn't to-day, or yesterday, that you and I learned how to dodge an oath. Open that box there, I'll have a look through it for myself."

"That you never shall," said Dunn, fiercely, as he grasped the bundle of keys that lay before him and placed them in his breast-pocket.

"Come, I like your pluck, Dunn, though it won't serve your turn this time. I'll either see that box opened before me now, or I'll carry it off with me—which shall it be?"

"Neither, by Heaven!" cried Dunn, whose passion was now roused effectually.

"We'll first of all get these out of the way; they're ugly playthings," said Davis, as with a spring he seized the pistols and hurled them through the open window; in doing so, however, he necessarily leaned forward, and partly turned his back

towards Dunn. With a gesture quick as lightning, Dunn drew a loaded pistol from his breast, and placing the muzzle almost close to the other's head, drew the trigger. A quick motion of the neck made the ball glance from the bone of the skull, and, passing down amongst the muscles of the neck, settle above the shoulder. Terrible as the wound was, Davis sprang upon him with the ferocity of a tiger. Not a word nor a cry escaped his lips, as, in all the agony of his suffering, he seized Dunn by the throat with one hand, while, drawing from his breast a heavy life-preserver, he struck him on the head with the other. A wild scream—a cry for help, half smothered in the groan that followed, rang out, and Dunn reeled from his seat and fell dead on the floor! Two fearful fractures had rent the skull open, and life was extinguished at once. Davis bent down, and gazed long and eagerly at the gastly wounds, but it was not till he had laid his hand over the heart that he knew them to be fatal. A short shudder, more like the sense of sudden cold than any sentiment of horror, passed over him as he stood for a few seconds motionless; then opening the dead man's coat, he drew forth his keys and searched for that one which pertained to the red box. He carefully placed the box upon the table and unlocked it. The contents were title-deeds of the Glengariff family, but all in duplicate, and so artfully imitated, that it would have been scarcely possible to distinguish original from copy. Of the Lackingtons there was nothing but a release of all claims against Davenport Dunn, purporting to have been the act of the late Lord, but of which the signature was only indicated in pencil.

"The discovery wasn't worth the price," muttered Davis, as he turned a half-sickly look upon the lifeless mass at his feet. "I'm not the first who found out that the swag didn't pay for the smash—not," added he, after a moment, "that I was to blame here; it was he began it!"

With some strange mysterious blending of reverence for the dead, with a vague sense of how the sight would strike the first beholders, Davis raised the corpse from the floor and placed it on the seat. He then wiped the clotted gore from the forehead and dried the hair. It was a gruesome sight, and even he was not insensible to its terrors, for, as he turned away, he heaved a short, thick sigh. How long he stood thus, half stunned and bewildered, he knew not, but he was at length recalled to thought and activity by the loud whistle that announced the train was approaching a station. The next minute they glided softly in

beside a platform, densely crowded with travellers. Davis did not wait for the guard, but opened the door himself, and slowly, for he was in pain, descended from the carriage.

"Call the station-master here," said he to the first official he met. "Let some one, too, fetch a doctor, for I am badly wounded, and a policeman, for I want to surrender myself." He then added, after a pause, "There's a dead man in that carriage yonder!"

The terrible tidings soon spread abroad, and crowds pressed eagerly forward to gaze upon the horrible spectacle. No sooner was it announced that the murdered man was the celebrated Davenport Dunn, than the interest increased tenfold, and, with that marvellous ingenuity falsehood would seem ever to have at her disposal, a dozen artfully conceived versions of the late event were already in circulation. It was the act of a maniac—a poor creature driven mad by injustice and persecution. It was the vengeance of a man whose fortune had been ruined by Dunn. It was the father of a girl he had seduced and abandoned. It was a beggared speculator—a ruined trustee—and so on; each narrative, strangely enough, inferring that the fatal catastrophe was an expiation! How ready is the world to accept this explanation of the sad reverses that befall those it once has stooped to adulate—how greedily does it seek to repay itself for its own degrading homage, by maligning the idol of its former worship! Up to this hour no man had ever dared to whisper a suspicion of Dunn's integrity, and now, ere his lifeless clay was cold, many were floundering away in this pseudo morality about the little benefit all his wealth was to him, and wondering if his fate would not be a lesson! And so the train went on its way, the *coupé* with the dead body detached and left for the inspection of the inquest, and Davis on a sick-bed and in custody of the police.

His wound was far more serious than at first was apprehended; the direction the ball had taken could not be ascertained, and the pain was intense. Grog, however, would not condescend to speak of his suffering, but addressed himself vigorously to all the cares of his situation.

"Let me have some strong Cavendish tobacco and a pint of British gin, pen, ink, and paper, and no visitors."

The remonstrances of the doctor he treated with scorn.

"I'm not one of your West-end swells," said he, that's afraid of a little pain, nor one of your Guy's Hospital wretches that's frightened by the surgeon's tools; only no tinkering, no probing.

If you leave me alone, I have a constitution that will soon pull me through."

His first care was to dictate a telegraphic despatch to a well-known lawyer, whose skill in criminal cases had made him a wide celebrity. He requested him to come down at once and confer with him. His next was to write to his daughter, and in this latter task he passed nearly half the night. Written as it was in great bodily pain and no small suffering of mind, the letter was marvellously indicative of the man who penned it. He narrated the whole incident to its fatal termination exactly as it occurred; not the slightest effort did he make at exculpation for his own share in it; and he only deplored the misfortune in its effect upon the object he had in view.

"If Dunn," said he, "hadn't been so ready with his pistol, I believe we might have come to terms, but there's no guarding against accidents. As matters stand, Annesley must make his own fight, for, of course, I can be of little use to him or to any one else till the assizes are over. So far as I can see, the case is a bad one, and Conway most likely to succeed; but there's yet time for a compromise. I wish you'd take the whole affair into your own hands."

To enable her to enter clearly upon a question of such complication, he gave a full narrative, so far as he could, of the contested claim, showing each step he had himself taken in defence, and with what object he had despatched Paul Classon to the Crimea. Three entire pages were filled with this theme; of himself, and his own precarious fortunes, he said very little indeed.

"Don't be alarmed, Lizzy," wrote he; "if the coroner's inquest should find a verdict of 'Wilful Murder' against me, such a decision does not signify a rush; and as I mean to reserve all my defence for the trial, such a verdict is likely enough. There will be, besides this, the regular hue and cry people get up against the Gambler, the Leg, and who knows what else they'll call me. Don't mind that either, girl. Let the moralists wag their charitable tongues, we can afford to make a waiting race, and, if I don't mistake much, before the trial comes off Davenport Dunn himself will be more ill thought of than Kit Davis. Above all, however, don't show in public; get away from Rome, and stay for a month or two in some quiet, out-of-the-way place, where people cannot make remarks upon your manner, and either say, 'See how this disgraceful affair has cut her up,' or, 'Did you ever see any one so brazen under an open shame?'

"I have sent for Ewin Jones, the lawyer, and expect him by the down train; if he should say anything worth repeating to you I'll add it ere I seal this."

A little lower down the page were scrawled half illegibly the following few words:

"Another search for the ball and no better luck; it has got down amongst some nerves, where they're afraid to follow it—a sort of Chancery Court. Jones is here, and thinks 'we'll do,' particularly if 'the Press' blackguards Dunn well in the mean time. Remember me to A. B., and keep him from talking nonsense about the business—for a while, at least—that is, if you can, and

"Believe me, yours, as ever,

"C. DAVEY"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE TRIAL.

SCARCELY had the town been struck by the large placards announcing the dreadful murder of Davenport Dunn, which paraded the streets in all directions, when a second edition of the morning papers brought the first tidings of the ruin that was to follow that event, and now in quick succession came news that the Treasurer of the Grand Glengarriff Company had gone off with some fifty thousand pounds; that the great Ossory Bank had stopped payment; companies on every hand smashing; misfortune and calamity everywhere. Terrible as was the detail which the inquest revealed, the whole interest of the world was turned to the less striking but scarcely less astounding news that society had for years back been the dupe of the most crafty and unprincipled knave of all Europe, that the great idol of its worship, the venerated and respected in all enterprises of industry, the man of large philanthropy and wide benevolence, was a schemer and a swindler, unprincipled and unfeeling. The fatal machinery of deception and falsehood which his life maintained crumbled to ruin at the very moment of his death; he was himself the mainspring of all fraud, and when he ceased to dictate, the game of roguery was over. While, therefore, many deplored the awful crime which had just been committed, and sorrowed over the stain cast upon our age and our civilisation, there arose amidst their grief the wilder and more heartrending cry of thousands brought to destitution and beggary by this bold, bad man.

Of the vast numbers who had dealings with him, scarcely any escaped: false title-deeds, counterfeited shares, forged scrip abounded. The securities entrusted to his keeping in all the

trustfulness of an unlimited confidence had been pledged for loans of money; vast sums alleged to have been advanced on mortgage were embezzled without a shadow of security. From the highest in the Peerage to the poorest peasant, all were involved in the same scheme of ruin, and the great fortunes of the rich and the hardly-saved pittance of the poor alike engulfed. So suddenly did the news break upon the world that it actually seemed incredible. It was not alone a shock given to mercantile credit and commercial honesty, but it seemed an outrage against whatever assumed to be high-principled and honourable. It could not be denied that this man had been the world's choicest favourite. Upon *him* had been lavished all the honours and rewards usually reserved for the greatest benefactors of their kind. The favours of the Crown, the friendship and intimacy with the highest in station, immense influence with the members of the Government, power and patronage to any extent, and, greater than all these, because more wide-spread and far-reaching, a sort of acceptance that all he said and did, and planned and projected, was certain to be for the best, and that they who opposed his views or disparaged his conceptions were sure to be mean-minded and envious men, jealous of the noble ascendancy of his great nature. And all this because he was rich and could enrich others! Had the insane estimate of this man been formed by those fighting the hard battle of fortune, and so crushed by poverty that even a glimpse of affluence was a gleam of Paradise, it might have been more pardonable; but far from it. Davenport Dunn's chief adherents and his primest flatterers were themselves great in station and rolling in wealth; they were many of them the princes of the land. The richest Banker of all Europe—he whose influence has often decided the fate of contending nations—was Dunn's tried and trusted friend. The great Minister whose opening speech of a session was the *mot d'ordre* for half the globe had taken counsel with him, stooping to ask his advice, and condescending to endorse his opinions. A proud old noble, as haughty a member of his order as the Peerage possessed, did not disdain to accept him for a son-in-law; and now the great Banker was to find himself defrauded, the great Minister disgraced, and the noble Lord who had stooped to his alliance was to see his estate dissipated and his fortune lost!

What a moral strain did not the great monitors of our age pour forth—what noble words of reproof fell from Pulpit and Press upon the lust of wealth, the base pursuit of gold!—what

touching contrasts were drawn between the hard-won competence of the poor man and the ill-gotten abundance of the gambler. How impressively was the lesson proclaimed, that patient industry was a nobler characteristic of a people than successful enterprise, and that it was not to lucky chances and accidental success, but to the virtues of truthfulness, order, untiring labour, and economy, that England owed the high place she occupied amongst the nations of the earth. All this was, perhaps, true: the only pity was, that the Pæan over our greatness should be also a funeral wail over thousands reduced to beggary and want! For weeks the newspapers had no other themes than the misery of this man's cruel frauds. Magistrates were besieged by appeals from people reduced to the last destitution; public offices crowded with applicants, pressing to know if the titles or securities they held as the sole guarantees of a livelihood, were true or false. All confidence seemed gone. Men trembled at every letter they opened, and none knew whether the tidings of each moment might not be the announcement of utter ruin.

Until the event had actually occurred, it was not easy to conceive how the dishonesty of one man could so effectually derange the whole complex machinery of a vast society; but so it really proved. So intensely had the money-getting passion taken possession of the national mind—so associated had national prosperity seemed to be with individual wealth—that nothing appeared great, noble, or desirable but gold, and the standard of material value was constituted to be the standard of all moral excellence: intending to honour Industry, the nation had paid its homage to Money!

Of all the victims to Dunn's perfidy, there was one who never could be brought to believe in his guilt. This was the old Earl of Glengariff. So stunned was he by the first news of the murder that his faculties never rightly recovered the shock, and his mind balanced between a nervous impatience for Dunn's arrival and a dreary despondency as to his coming; and in this way he lived for years, his daughter watching over him with every care and devotion, hiding with many an artifice the painful signs of their reduced fortune, and feeding with many a false hope the old man's yearnings for wealth and riches. The quiet old town of Bruges was their resting-place, and there, amidst deserted streets and grass-grown pavements, they lived, pitied and unknown.

The "Dunn Frauds," as by journalist phrase they were now

recognised, formed for months long a daily portion of the public reading, and only at length yielded their interest to a case before the "Lords"—the claim preferred by a Crimean hero to the title of Viscount Lackington, and of which some successful trials at Bar gave speedy promise of good result. Indeed, had the question been one to be decided by popular suffrage, the issue would not have been very doubtful. Through the brilliant records of "our own correspondent" and the illustrated columns of a distinguished "weekly," Charles Conway had now become a celebrity, and meetings were held and councils consulted how best to honour his arrival on his return to England. As though glad to turn from the disparaging stories of fraud, baseness, and deception, which Dunn's fall disclosed to nobler and more spirit-stirring themes, the nation seemed to hail with a sort of enthusiasm the character of this brave soldier!

His whole military career was narrated at length, and national pride deeply flattered by a record which proved that in an age stigmatised by late disclosures, chivalry and heroism had not died out, but survived in all their most brilliant and ennobling features. While municipal bodies voted their freedom and swords of honour, and public journals discussed the probable rewards of the Crown, another turn was given to popular interest by the announcement that, on a certain day, Christopher Davis was to be tried at the Old Bailey for the murder of Davenport Dunn. Had the hand which took away his life been that of some one brought down to beggary by his machinations, a certain amount of sympathy would certainly have been wrung from national feeling. Here, however, if any such plea existed, no token was given. Davis had maintained at the coroner's inquest a dogged, unbroken silence, simply declaring that he reserved whatever he meant to say for the time of his trial. He did not scruple, besides, to exhibit an insolent contempt for a verdict which he felt could exercise little influence on the future, while to his lawyer he explained that he was not going to give "Conway's people" the information that he had so totally failed in securing the documents he sought for, and his presumed possession of which might yet induce a compromise with Beecher.

In vain was he assured that his obstinate refusal to answer the questions of the jury would seriously endanger his safety by arming the public mind against him; he sternly resisted every argument on this score, and curtly said, "There are higher interests at stake than mine here—it is my daughter, the

Viscountess, is to be thought of, not me." Nor did his reserve end there. Through the long interval which preceded his trial, he confided very sparingly in his lawyer, his interviews with him being mainly occupied in discussing points of law, what was and what was not evidence, and asking for a history of such cases—if any there were—as resembled his own. In fact, it soon appeared that, having mastered certain details, Davis was determined to conduct his own defence, and address the jury in his own behalf.

The interest the public takes in a criminal trial is often mainly dependent on the rank of the persons implicated; not only is sympathy more naturally attracted to those whose condition in life would seem to have removed them from the casualties of crime, but, in such cases, the whole circumstances are sure to be surrounded with features of more dramatic interest. Now, although Davis by no means occupied that station which could conciliate such sympathy, he was widely known, and to men of the first rank in England. The habits of the Turf and the Ring establish a sort of acquaintanceship, and even intimacy, between men who have no other neutral territory in life, and, through these, Davis was on the most familiar terms with noble Lords and honourable gentlemen, who took his bets and pocketed his money as freely as from their equals. With these, his indomitable resolution, his "pluck," had made him almost a favourite. They well knew, too, how they could count upon these same faculties in any hour of need, and "Old Grog" was the resource in many a difficulty that none but himself could have confronted.

If his present condition excited no very warm anxiety for his fate, it at least created the liveliest curiosity to see the man, to watch how he would comport himself in such a terrible exigency, to hear the sort of defence he would make, and to mark how far his noted courage would sustain him in an ordeal so novel and so appalling. The newspapers also contributed to increase this interest, by daily publishing some curious story or other illustrating Davis's early life, and, as may be surmised, not always to his advantage on the score of probity and honour. Photographers were equally active; so that when, on the eventful morning, the clerk of the arraign demanded of the prisoner whether he pleaded guilty or not guilty, the face and features of the respondent were familiar to every one in the Court. Some expected to see him downcast and crestfallen, some looked for a manner of insolent swagger and pretension. He was equally

free from either, and in his calm but resolute bearing, as he surveyed bench and jury-box, there was unmistakable dignity and power. If he did not seek the recognitions of his acquaintances throughout the Court, he never avoided them, returning the salutations of the "swells," as he called them, with the easy indifference he would have accorded them at Newmarket.

I have no pretension to delay my reader by any details of the trial itself. It was a case where all the evidence was purely circumstantial, but wherein the most deliberate and deep-laid scheme could be distinctly traced. With all the force of that consummate skill in narrative which a criminal lawyer possesses, Davis was tracked from his leaving London to his arrival at Chester. Of his two hours spent there the most exact account was given, and although some difficulty existed in proving the identity of the traveller who had taken his place at that station with the prisoner, there was the strongest presumption to believe they were one and the same. As to the dreadful events of the crime itself, all must be inferred from the condition in which the murdered man was found and the nature of the wounds that caused his death. Of these, none could entertain a doubt; the medical witnesses agreed in declaring that life must have been immediately extinguished. Lastly, as to the motive of the crime—although not essential in a legal point of view—the prosecutor, in suggesting some possible cause, took occasion to dwell upon the character of the prisoner, and even allude to some early events in his life. Davis abruptly stopped this train of argument, by exclaiming, "None of these are in the indictment, Sir. I am here on a charge of murder, and not for having horsewhipped *you* at Ascot, the year Comus won the Queen's Cup."

An interruption so insulting, uttered in a voice that resounded throughout the Court, now led to a passionate appeal from the Counsel to the Bench, and a rebuke from the Judge to Davis, who reminded him how unbecoming such an outrage was, from one standing in the solemn situation that he did.

"Solemn enough if guilty, my Lord, but only irksome and unpleasant to a man with as easy a conscience as mine," was the quick reply of Grog, who now eyed the Court in every part with an expression of insolent defiance.

The evidence for the prosecution having closed, Davis arose, and, with a calm self-possession, addressed the Court:

"I believe," said he, "that if I followed the approved method in cases like the present, I'd begin by expressing the great con-

fidence and satisfaction I feel in being tried by a Judge so just and a Jury so intelligent as that before me; and then, after a slight diversion as to the blessings of a good conscience, I'd give you fifteen or twenty minutes of pathetic lamentation for the good and great man whose untimely death is the cause of this trial. Now, I'm not about to do any of these. Judges are generally upright; Juries are, for the most part, painstaking and fair. I conclude, therefore, that I'm as safe with his Lordship and yourselves as with any others; and as to Mr. Davenport Dunn and his virtues, why, gentlemen, like the character of him who addresses you, the least said the better! Not," added he, sternly, "that I fear comparison with him—far from it; we were both adventurers, each of us traded upon the weakness of his fellows; the only difference was, that he played a game that could not but win, while I took my risks like a man, and as often suffered as I succeeded. *My* victims—if that's the phrase in vogue for them—were young fellows starting in life with plenty of cash and small experience; *his* were widows, with a miserable pittance, scarcely enough for support; orphan children, with a thousand or two trust money; or, as you might see in the papers, poor governesses eagerly seizing the occasion to provide for the last years of a toilsome life. But my opinion is you have no concern with *his* character, or with *mine*; you are there to know how he came by his death, and I'll tell you that."

In a narrative told calmly, without stop or impediment, and utterly free from a word of exaggeration or a sentiment of passion, he narrated how, by an appointment, the nature of which he refused to enter upon, he had met Davenport Dunn on the eventful night in question. The business matter between them, he said—and of this, too, he declined to give any particular information—had led to much and angry recrimination, till at length, carried beyond the bounds of all temper and reserve, Davis rashly avowed that he was in the possession of the secret history of all Dunn's frauds; he showed, by details the most exact, that he knew how for years and years this man had been a swindler and a cheat, and he declared that the time for unmasking him had arrived, and that the world should soon know the stuff he was made of. "There was, I suspected," continued he, "in the red box at my feet a document whose production in a trial would have saved a friend of my own from ruin, and which Dunn was then carrying up to London to dispose of to the opponent in the *scit*. I affected to be certain

that it was there, and I quickly saw by his confusion that I guessed aright. I proposed terms for it as liberal as he could wish, equal to any he could obtain elsewhere. He refused my offers. I asked then to see and read it, to assure myself that it was the paper I suspected. This, too, he refused. The altercation grew warm; time pressed, for we were not far from the station where I meant to stop, and driven to half desperation, I declared that I'd smash the box if he would not consent to unlock it. I stooped as I said this, and as my head was bent he drew a pistol and shot me. The ball glanced from my skull and entered my neck. This is the wound," said he, baring his throat, "and here is the bullet. I was scarcely stunned, and I sprang to my legs and killed him!"

The sensation of horror the last words created was felt throughout the Court, and manifested by a low murmur of terror and disgust. Davis looked around him with a cold, resolute stare, as if he did not shrink in the least from this show of disapprobation.

"I am well aware," said he, calmly, "there are many here at this moment would have acted differently. That lady with the lace veil yonder, for instance, would have fainted; the noble Lord next the Bench, there, would have dropped on his knees and begged his life. I see one of the Jury, and if I can read a human countenance, he tells me he'd have screamed out for the guard. Well, I have nothing to say against any of these ways of treating the matter. None of them occurred to *me*, and I killed him! The Crown Lawyer has told you the rest; that I surrendered myself at once to the police, and never attempted an escape. A legal friend has mentioned to me that witnesses to character are occasionally called in cases like the present, and that I might derive benefit from such testimony. Nothing would be easier for me than this. There is a noble Lord, a member of the Cabinet, knows me long and intimately; there's a venerable Bishop now in town could also speak for me. He taught me chicken hazard thirty years ago, and I have never ceased to think affectionately of him. There's a Judge in the adjoining Court who was my chum and companion for two years—Well, my Lord, I have done. I shall call none of them; nor have I anything more to observe."

The Jury, after a short address from the Judge, retired, and Davis's lawyer, rising, approached the dock and whispered something to the prisoner.

"What's the betting?" murmured Grog.

"Even as to the first charge. 'Two to one for a verdict of manslaughter."

"Take all you can get for me on the first," said Grog, "and I'll take the odds on the other in hundreds. It's a sort of a hedge for me. There, let's lose no time; they'll be back soon."

In a few minutes after this brief conversation, the Jury returned into Court. Their finding was Not Guilty of murder, Guilty of manslaughter only.

Davis listened to the decision calmly, and then, having pencilled down a few figures in his note-book, he muttered, "Not so bad, neither; seven hundred on the double event!" So occupied was he in his calculations, that he had not heard a recommendation to mercy, which the Jury had appended, though somewhat informally, to their verdict.

"What a pot of money one might have had against that," said Davis. "Isn't it strange none of us should ever have thought of it!"

The Judge reserved sentence till he had thought over the recommendation, and the trial was over.

CHAPTER XCIX.

THE END OF ALL THINGS.

FROM the day of Davenport Dunn's death to the trial of Kit Davis three whole months elapsed—a short period in the term of human life, but often sufficient to include great events. It only took three months, once on a time, for a certain great Emperor to break up his camp at Boulogne-sur-Mer and lay Austria at his feet! In the same short space the self-same Emperor regained and lost his own great empire. What wonder, then, if three months brought great and important changes to the fortunes of some of the individuals in this story.

I have not any pretension to try to interest my reader for the circumstances by which Charles Conway recovered the ancient title and the estates that rightfully belonged to him, nor to ask his company through the long and intricate course of law proceedings by which this claim was established. Enough to say that amidst the documents which contributed to this success, none possessed the same conclusive force as that discovered so accidentally by Sybella Kellett. It formed the connecting link in a most important chain of evidence, and was in a great measure the cause of ultimate success. It rarely happens that the great mass of the public feels any strong interest in the issue of cases like this; the very rank of the litigants removing them, by reason of their elevation, from so much of commonplace sympathy, as well as the fact that the investigation so frequently involves the very driest of details, the general public regards these suits with a sentiment of almost indifference.

Far different was it on the present occasion. Every trial at Bar was watched with deep interest, the newspapers commen-

ting largely on the evidence, and prognosticating in unmistakable terms the result. Crimean Conway was the national favourite, and even the lawyers engaged against him were exposed to a certain unpopularity. At length came the hearing before the Privilege Committee of the Lords, and the decision by which the claim was fully established and Charles Conway declared to be the Viscount Lackington. The announcement created a sort of jubilee. Whether the good public thought that the honours of the Crown were bestowed upon their favourite with a somewhat niggard hand, or whether the romance of the case—the elevation of one who had served in the ranks and was now a Peer of the realm—had captivated their imaginations, certain it is they had adopted his cause as their own, and made of his success a popular triumph.

Few people of Europe indulge in such hearty bursts of enthusiasm as our own, and there is no more genuine holiday than that when they can honour one who has conferred credit upon his nation. Conway, whose name but a short time back was unknown, had now become a celebrity, and every paragraph about him was read with the liveliest interest. To learn that he had arrived safely at Constantinople, that he was perfectly recovered from his wounds, that he had dined on a certain day with the Ambassador, and that at a special audience from the Sultan he had been decorated with the first-class of the Medjidié, were details that men interchanged when they met as great and gratifying tidings, when suddenly there burst upon the world the more joyful announcement of his marriage: "At the Embassy chapel at Pera, this morning, the Viscount Lackington, better known to our readers as Crimean Conway, was married to Miss Kellett, only daughter of the late Captain Kellett, of Kellett's Court. A novel feature of the ceremony consisted in the presence of Rifaz Bey, sent by order of the Sultan to compliment the distinguished bridegroom, and to be the bearer of some very magnificent ornaments for the bride. The happy couple are to leave this in H.M.S. *Dædalus* to-morrow for Malta; but, intending to visit Italy before their return, will not probably reach England for two or three months."

Within a few weeks after, a passage in the *Gazette* announced that Viscount Lackington had been honoured with the Bath, and named Aide-de-Camp to the Queen. It is not for poor chroniclers like ourselves to obtrude upon good fortune like this, and destroy, by attempted description, all that constitutes its real happiness. The impertinence that presses itself in

personal visits on those who seek seclusion, is only equalled by that which would endeavour to make history of moments too sacred for recording.

Our story opened of a lovely morning in autumn—it closes of an evening in the same mellow season, and in the self-same spot, too, the Lake of Como. Long motionless shadows stretched across the calm lake as, many-coloured, from the tints of the surrounding woods, it lay bathed in the last rays of a rich sunset. It was the hour when, loaded with perfume, the air moves languidly through the leaves and the grass, and a sense of tender sadness seems to pervade nature. Was it to watch the last changes of the rich colouring, as from a rose pink the mountain summits grew a deep crimson, then faded again to violet, and, after a few minutes of deepest blue, darkened into night, that a small group was gathered silently on the lake terrace of the Villa d'Este? They were but three—a lady and two gentlemen. *She*, seated a little apart from the others, appeared to watch the scene before her with intense interest, bending down her head at moments as if to listen, and then resuming her former attitude.

The younger of the men seemed to participate in her anxiety—if such it could be called—and peered no less eagerly through the gathering gloom that now spread over the lake. The elder, a short, thick-set figure, displayed his impatience in many a hurried walk of a few paces, and a glance, quick and short over the water. None of them spoke a word. At last the short man asked, in a gruff, coarse tone, "Are you quite sure she said it was this evening they were to arrive?"

"Quite sure; she read the letter over for me. Besides, my sister Georgina makes no mistakes of this kind, and she'd not have moved off to Lugano so suddenly if she was not convinced that they would be here to-night."

"Well, I will say your grand folk have their own notions of gratitude as they have of everything else. She owes these people the enjoyment of a capital income, which, out of delicacy, they have left her for her life, and the mode she takes to acknowledge the favour is by avoiding to meet them."

"And what more natural!" broke in the lady's voice. "Can she possibly forget that they have despoiled her of her title, her station, her very name? In her place, I feel I should have done exactly the same."

"That's true," burst out the younger man. "Lizzy is right.

But for them, Georgina had still been the Viscountess Lackington."

"*You* have a right to feel it that way," laughed out the short man, scornfully. "You are both in the same boat as herself, only that they haven't left *you* twelve hundred per annum!"

"I hear a boat now; yes, I can mark the sound of the oars," said the lady.

"What a jolly change would a good squall now make in your fortunes," said the short man. "A puff of wind and a few gallons of water are small things to stand between a man and twelve thousand a year!"

The suggestion did not seem to find favour with the others, for they made no reply.

"You never sent off your letter, I think?" resumed he, addressing the younger man.

"Of course not, father," broke in the female voice. "It was an indignity I could not stoop to."

"Not stoop to?" cried out Grog, for it is needless to say that it was himself, with his daughter and son-in-law, who formed the group. "I like that—I like *our* not stooping when it's crawling we're come to!"

"Ay, by Jove!" muttered Beecher, ruefully, "that it is, and over a rough road, too!"

"Well, *I'd* have sent the letter," resumed Grog. "*I'd* have put it this way: 'You didn't deal harshly with the Dowager; don't treat *us* worse than *her*.'"

"Father, father!" cried Lizzy, imploringly, "how unlike you all this is."

"I know it is, girl—I know it well enough. Since that six months I passed in Newgate I don't know myself. I'm not the man I was, nor I never shall be again. That same dull life and its dreary diet have broken up old Grog." A heavy sigh closed these words, and for some minutes the silence was unbroken.

"There comes a boat up to the landing-place," cried Beecher, suddenly.

"I must see them, and I will," said Lizzy, rising, and drawing her shawl around her. "I have more than a mere curiosity to see this Crimean hero and his heroic wife." It was hard to say in what spirit the words were uttered, so blended was the ardour and the sarcasm in their tone. "Are you coming, father?"

"I—no. Not a bit of it," said Grog, rudely. "I'd rather see

a promising two-year-old than all the heroes and all the beauties in Europe."

"And you, Beecher?" asked she, with a half smile.

"Well, I've no great wish on the subject. They have both of them cost me rather too heavily to inspire any warm interest in their behalf."

The words were scarcely uttered, when the large window of the room adjoining the terrace was flung open, and a great flood of light extended to where they stood; at the same moment a gentleman with a lady on his arm advanced towards them.

"Mr. Annesley Beecher is here, I believe?" said the stranger.

"Yes; that is my name, Sir," was the answer.

"Let me claim a cousin's privilege to shake your hand, then," said the other. "You knew me once as Charles Conway, and my wife claims you as a still older friend."

"My father bore you the warmest affection," said Sybella, eagerly.

Beecher could but mutter some half inarticulate words.

"I have done you, what you must feel a cruel injury," said Conway, "but I believe the game was never yet found out where all could rise winners. There is, however, a slight reparation yet in my power. The lawyers tell me that a separate suit will be required to establish our claim to the Irish estates. Take them, therefore; you shall never be disturbed in their possession by me or mine. All I ask is, let there be no bad blood between us. Let us be friends."

"You may count upon me, at all events," said Lizzy, extending her hand to him. "I am, indeed, proud to know you."

"Nor would I be forgotten in this pleasant compact," said Sybella, advancing towards Lizzy. "We have less to forgive, my dear cousin, and we can be friends without even an explanation."

The acquaintance thus happily opened, they continued to walk the terrace together for hours, till at length the chill night air warned Conway that he was still an invalid.

"Till to-morrow, then," said Sybella, as she kissed Lizzy's cheek affectionately.

"Till to-morrow!" replied the other, as a heavy tear rolled down her cheek, for *hers* was a sad heart, as she followed with her eyes their retreating figures.

"Ain't he a trump!" cried Beecher, as he drew his wife's arm within his own, and led her along at his side. "He doesn't believe one syllable about our sending those fellows over to the

Crimea to crib the papers; he fancies we were all 'on the square'—Oh, I forgot," broke he in, suddenly, "you were never in the secret yourself. At all events, he's a splendid fellow, and he's going to leave the Irish estates with us, and that old house at Kellett's Court. But where's your father? I'm dying to tell him this piece of news."

"Here I am," said Grog, gruffly, as he came forth from a little arbour, where he had been hiding.

"We're all right, old boy," burst in Beecher, joyfully. "I tried the cousin dodge with Conway, rubbed him down smoothly, and the upshot is, he has offered us the Irish property."

Grog gave a short grunt and fixed his eyes steadfastly on his daughter, who, pale and trembling all over, caught her father's arm for support.

"He felt naturally enough," resumed Beecher, "that ours was a deuced hard case."

"I want to hear what *your* answer was—what reply *you* made him!" gasped out Lizzy, painfully.

"Could there be much doubt about that?" cried Beecher. "I booked the bet at once."

"No, no, I will not believe it," said she, in a voice of deep emotion; "you never did so. It was but last night, as we walked here on this very spot, I told you how, in some far-away colony of England, we could not fail to earn an honourable living; that I was well content to bear my share of labour, and you agreed with me that such a life was far better than one of dependence or mere emergency. You surely could not have forgotten this!"

"I didn't exactly forget it, but I own I fancied twelve hundred a year, and a snug old house, a better thing than road-making at Victoria, or keeping a grammar-school at Auckland."

"And you had the courage to reason thus to the man who had descended to the ranks as a common soldier to vindicate a name to which nothing graver attached than a life of waste and extravagance! No, no, tell me that you are only jesting with me, Annesley. You never said this!"

"Lizzy's right—by Heaven, she's right!" broke in Grog, resolutely.

"If you mean that I refused him, you're both much mistaken; and to clinch the compact, I even said I'd set out for Ireland to-morrow."

"I'm for New Orleans," said Grog, with a rough shake, as though throwing a weight from his shoulders.

"Will you have a travelling companion, father?" asked Lizzy, in a low voice.

"Who is it to be, girl?"

"Lizzy—your own Lizzy!"

"That will I, girl," cried he, as he threw his arms about her, and kissed her in sincere affection.

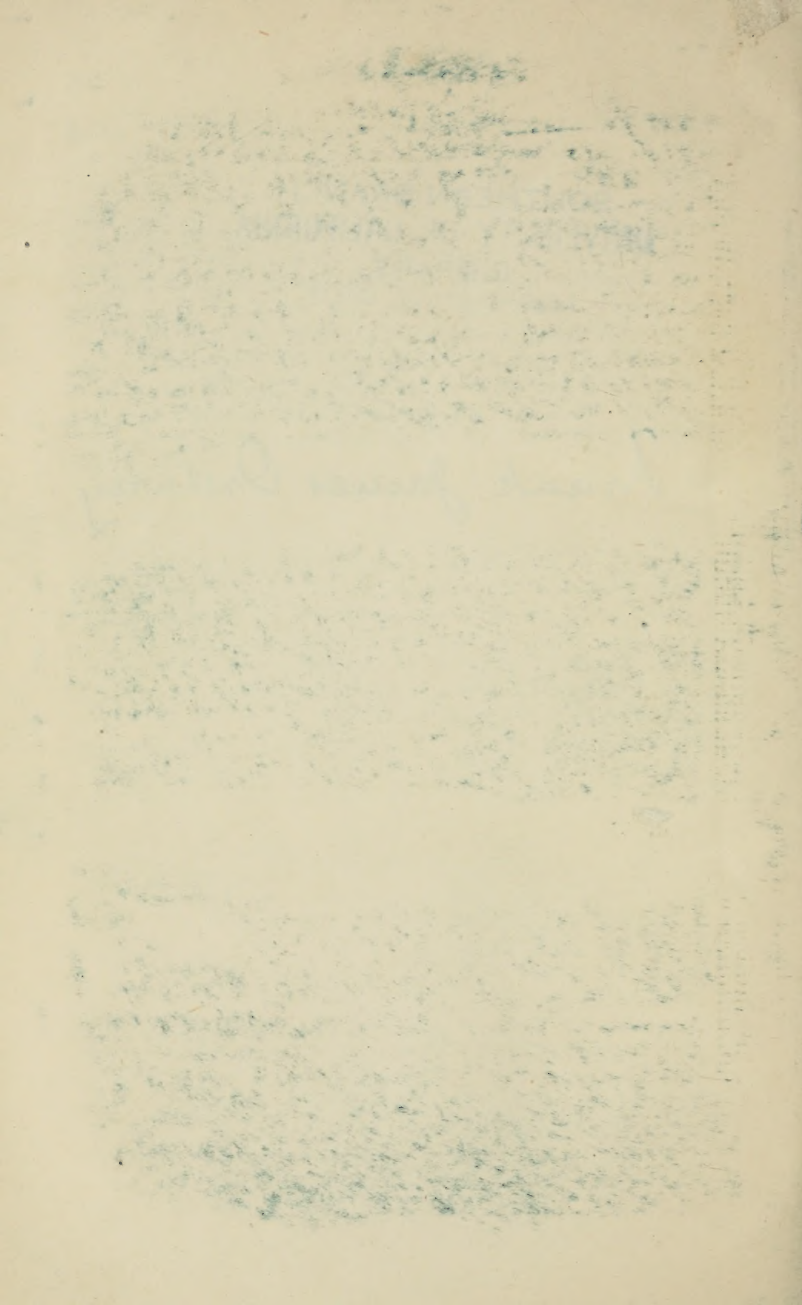
"Good-by, Sir," said she, holding out her hand to Beecher. "Our compact was a hollow one from the first. It would be but a miserable deception to maintain it."

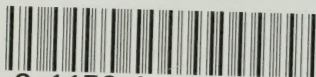
"I knew luck was going to turn with me!" muttered Beecher, as he watched her leaving the terrace, "but I'd never have believed any one if he'd told me that I'd have booked an estate and scratched my marriage all on the same evening!"

THE END.

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